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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 434. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 24TH, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

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No. 434.—One Penny. April 24, 1897.

SHORT STORIES

TOLD BY THE DOCTOR.

No. I.—THE MYSTERY OF A COUNTRY HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

Major Dessalene's Illness.

In looking back over my experiences, I am driven to the conclusion that no single medical man can have had so many romances, crimes, and mysteries brought under his notice in connection with his profession as I have been called upon in my time to help investigate. My friend, Tom Arlack, Q.C., says that if he is called a criminal lawyer, I ought to be dubbed a criminal doctor, and the term is not inapplicable to me.

Soon after I passed my examination, and became qualified to practise, the death of a rich relative removed the necessity for my doing so, and I became known among my large circle of medical friends as a man who could be relied on to take up at a moment's notice any case which called for more time or careful investigation than they, with their practices to attend to, could personally afford.

It became known, too, that I had given a great deal of study to that mysterious influence of mind over mind, which men call, indifferently, hypnotism, mesmerism, or animal magnetism, a branch of study which medical men too often sedulously neglect; and this fact brought some very interesting cases which my friends preferred not to touch. Then again, after the notorious Dessalene case, it became a generally-received impression that "mysteries" were my speciality; and people with "mysteries" to unravel sought me out accordingly to assist in investigating them.

It was certainly the Dessalene case which gave me my reputation in this direction, although I really did nothing towards throwing light on what was in the beginning a really puzzling affair. My friend, Dr. Diplock, was the Dessalenes' family doctor—he had a pretty big practice round Almond Ferry, where the Dessalenes had their country house—and he asked me to come over and see the Major, simply because he could not make out what on earth was the matter with him.

"Why, it is a case of opium poisoning," I said to Diplock, after I had seen his patient, and he had taken me downstairs to ask my opinion. He shook his head.

"That is what I thought, but he has been like this for nearly a fortnight. If he had taken a dose of opium then, he would be better, or dead, now; but he remains just the same—unconscious most of the time, with a little wakening up now and then."

"Oh, yes!" I said, "if it is opium the dose must be regularly repeated—each time too little to cause death outright."

"And each time too much for any opium-taker to give himself," added my friend.

"I do not know—an habitual opium-drinker. But one can see at a glance that Major Dessalene is not that," I said. "It seems as though somebody must be poisoning him slowly."

"Yes," said Diplock, "I have thought of that."

"Then why not have the police in to see into the case before the murderer succeeds in his purpose?"

"Because I do not want to make a fool of myself," said my companion. "The Major tells me, when he has a lucid moment, that he has been like this before, that his illness is considered an affection of the brain. If it is, and I bring a lot of

The men went out on the moors every day.

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police ferreting about, why, I shall lose my practice to begin with. Now you are just the man. You take up the case as a medical man, and if there is foul play going on, I think I can trust you better than the average detective to find it out."

I thanked him for the compliment. Looking back now, I am afraid that I did not justify his opinion of me, although I had the best of opportunities. Diplock, I found, had arranged that I should live at the house, where there was certainly plenty of room for me, although the place was full of guests. The Major and his young wife had just filled the house for the shooting when the former's illness began, and Dessalene, in his intervals of consciousness, was very earnest in insisting that everything should go on as if he were well.

According to Diplock, the Major was not of much account in the house. Mrs. Dessalene was the ruling spirit. So things really did go on exactly as they had been doing before the Major's illness. The men went out on the moors every day, and most of them forgot even to inquire how their host was getting on when they returned.

As Mr. Diplock was leaving me entirely in charge of the case, and as there seemed some suspicion of foul play, I made him tell me all he could about the people in the house. As he did so, my interest became centred on three people: the hostess, Mrs. Dessalene, her cousin, Captain Allis, and Sir Reginald Dyne, who had come up the day before Dessalene's seizure.

Mrs. Dessalene was not yet twenty-four. My informant knew the date, because he had helped her into the world. She was the daughter of a clergyman, with a living not ten miles away, and had only been married a little over a year. A beautiful woman she was, as I saw for myself later in the day, with big blue eyes in a clear, straight-featured face, framed in the most gossamer fluff of golden hair. I could see that old Diplock had a warm place in his heart for her. All the men were head-over ears in love with her, he said.

"What! is she a flirt?" I asked, and her champion shook his head.

"No, not a flirt. But I am sorry to say she acts like so many heart-broken women do, making a kind of sport of love since her own love story has ended unhappily."

I was rather mystified.

"It was not a love match, then—this marriage to Major Dessalene?" I asked.

"No, poor girl! She was driven into it by her parents, I am afraid."

"Then it is possible that she may be trying to poison the old gentleman. As you know so much about her, Diplock, can you tell me whether she was really in love with anybody at the time she married?"

"I am afraid so. Everybody thought she would marry Sir Reginald Dyne, to whom her father was tutor. But he was poor, worse luck, and her father raised obstacles. You see I am pretty well acquainted with her history, as I have attended the family all her lifetime.

"The Canon, her father, was in Major Dessalene's debt rather deeply. All of a sudden it was announced that Miss Clytie was to marry the Major, and Sir Reginald went abroad—or rather he was abroad till the day of the wedding, and came back as soon as he heard the news. The saddest thing about it was that Dyne had just come into a fortune unexpectedly, and was coming home to ask Clytie to marry him. I happened to be the one to tell him the news, poor fellow, that Clytie had that day become Mrs. Dessalene. This visit is the first occasion on which they have met since, I believe."

"It is rather queer, his coming," I said, "under the circumstances, isn't it?"

Dr. Diplock stammered:

"Yes—I took it upon myself to suggest as much to Mrs. Dessalene. But I was given to understand that the invitation came from the Major."

"Who is ignorant, of course, of the little history you have told me?"

"Oh, no. Dessalene was quite aware how the land lay before he married his wife. So it seems strange. But he is a man full of queer whims."

"It seems like it," I said drily. "And does this old suitor make love to his pretty hostess?"

"No; he is the only man who doesn't."

"Who does not openly, you mean. The love-making may be all the more serious on that account. Do any of the other men seem in earnest?"

Good old Dr. Diplock lowered his voice to a whisper.

"Well, if you ask me, Favel, I think her cousin, the Captain, is in deadly earnest. I want you to see Captain Allis. He is what I call a thoroughly wicked-looking man, although his breeding is perfect."

"A melodramatic villain," I said; "and he is in love with the pretty heroine. Then we must naturally suspect him of trying to murder the heedless husband. Why, it makes quite a pretty little story. Madam is in love with the handsome Baronet, but married to the ancient Major. The wicked Captain is in love with Madam, but the passion is not reciprocated. The wicked Captain removes the ancient Major, and hangman removes the wicked Captain, and the hero and heroine, Mrs. Dessalene and the young Baronet, are left free to marry. A very pretty little story. It seems quite a pity for us to interfere, doesn't it?"

Dr. Diplock was hurt. "If you are going to treat this case as a jest," he said severely, "I am sorry I asked you to assist me in it."

I was serious at once. "I was not altogether jesting," I explained. "Do you not yourself expect that Captain Allis may be slowly poisoning our patient in order to marry his widow?"

"If so," said Diplock, "I am quite sure Mrs. Dessalene knows nothing at all about it."

"Of course not. Allis would find his labour lost as far as he is concerned. Now tell me—who is looking after our patient? Does his wife stay with him much?"

"Yes; she is a good wife. I had trouble in persuading her to go out this afternoon for her health's sake. She is always at her husband's bedside."

"A suspicious circumstance."

My old friend was certainly getting very short-tempered in his old age. My interruption put him into a passion, and I had quite a task to pacify him. I explained that I must come to the investigation with a perfectly impartial mind.

My old friend retorted that I came with the fixed idea that Mrs. Dessalene—one of the best women who ever lived—was poisoning her husband.

I never argue with people who feel deeply; so I went on making inquiries about my new patient's nursing.

"Who was the woman I saw in the room? A professional nurse?"

"Yes. I have just engaged her. Mrs. Dessalene has just given me a free hand in the matter—not a very likely thing for a woman to do if she were poisoning the man, as you think—and whatever the Major says in his lucid intervals, we take no notice of."

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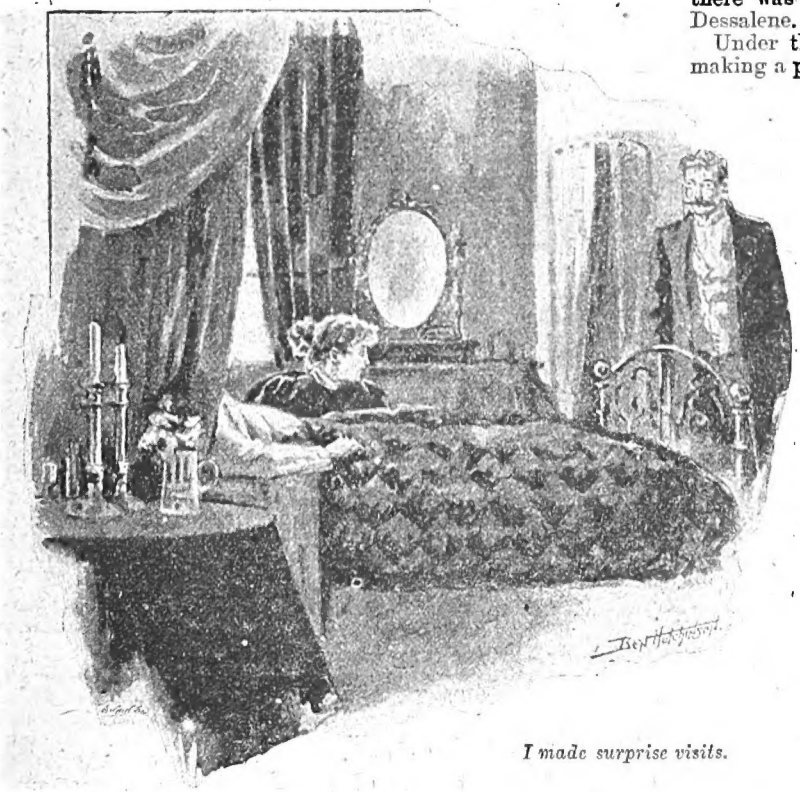
"The Major objected to the nurse coming?" I asked.

"Yes—and to your coming as well. He says we are making a great deal of fuss about a very insignificant illness. I often wonder if he is right. But I feel easier now I've done my best, and if there is anything wrong, you will be sure to find it out, thank goodness!"

CHAPTER II.

The First Murder.

I did not feel quite so sure as my old medical friend that I should discover the secret of Major Dessalene's illness. But I thought, at the same time, that if I did not discover the secret, it would not be for want of opportunity. I was given a couple of nicely-furnished rooms, exactly opposite that of my patient, with the understanding that I was to do exactly as I liked in the house—consider myself a guest, and join the shooting-parties, or keep to myself in my own rooms, as the whim took me. I was to direct the Major's treatment, of course, and rule in the sick-room; and I devoted myself during the first day or two in keeping a strict watch on all the food and medicine which my patient had prepared for him.



I made surprise visits.

I made surprise visits, too, when he was alone with his wife or any other member of the establishment. The nurse, whom Diplock had himself obtained from a nursing sisterhood in London, after the commencement of the illness, I could not, of course, include in my mental list of suspects. With that one exception everybody in the house was down on it, since there was no knowing at first what the relations of any person in the place to the Major actually were, or what motives the least likely might have in poisoning him.

As the days passed and I discovered more about the various people among whom I found myself the list naturally thinned down, and by the third or fourth day of my stay I began to believe that Captain Allis was the man on whom I must most particularly keep watch.

No wonder that old Diplock suspected him. He was often in the sick-room, being the only one of Major Dessalene's guests who made a point of exhibiting a distinct interest in his host's indisposition, and he called every morning to make inquiries or spend a few minutes by the sick man's bedside, an attention which, I am sorry to say, I did not ascribe to his good nature. Then there was no mistaking his passion for Mrs. Dessalene.

Under the circumstances I felt justified in making a private survey of the Captain's bedroom while he was out on the moors, in the hope of discovering some traces of the poison to which I ascribed my patient's indisposition, but I was no more successful there in finding opium than I had been in discovering it in the Major's food and medicine, or in any part of the sick-room.

That was on a Saturday, the fifth day after my arrival. In the evening my patient had one of his temporary improvements, and seemed much better than I had seen him yet.

He talked to me quite lucidly, asking my opinion of his illness, and seemed to take an interest in the little I told him about it. I did not mention my idea that he was being poisoned, and was rather surprised, therefore, to hear the suggestion from his own lips.

"I thought it was my brain again," he said, speaking dreamily, "but I do not know."

"Indeed," I said, as cheerfully as possible, "and what do you think now, Major Dessalene?"

"I think I am being poisoned!"

I concealed my interest, and answered lightly:

"Who would want to poison you, Major?"

"Every man in the house would. They are all after my wife. Clytie is too beautiful for a dull old fellow like me. Don't you think so, Dr. Favel?"

He had my name before my arrival. I answered that Mrs. Dessalene was undoubtedly beautiful; but that it was not customary for the husbands of beautiful women to be poisoned.

The sick man took no encouragement from my words or manner. He went on mumbling with a drowsy mournfulness:

"Every man here would be glad for me to die, so that he might have a chance of marrying Clytie, I know. I have watched them before I was ill."

"My dear sir," I said, "if you think that, why on earth don't you have the house cleared? I understood that it was only by your express desire that the party did not break up."

My patient opened his eyes in faint surprise.

"No, no; it is Clytie," he said sadly. "I beg her every time—I know what I am doing—to send them

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away, and she will not. She says she won't be in an empty house with this mystery hanging over the place."

I had been inclined to like and admire Mrs. Dessalene, but when I heard this, she went down some pegs in my estimation, and up a little in my list of suspects, with Captain Allis at the top.

I asked the Major which of the men he suspected; but he seemed relapsing into his usual state of unconsciousness, and did not seem to hear my question. However, he must have done so, for suddenly he started, and, staring at me, whispered hoarsely: "Captain Allis." Then he fell back on the bed, breathing heavily. I poured out a dose of the counter-poison, with which I was trying to fight the opium, and held it to his lips; but it was too late for him to drink the potion. I had to force it between his teeth.

After glancing into the inner room, where the nurse, Sister Agnes, slept, to make sure that it was empty, I walked away to my own room across the passage, determined to keep watch on the sick room until Sister Agnes, who was enjoying a constitutional, returned; for it was always after these intervals of awakening that my patient's illness developed its worst form, and I was determined that he should not receive another murderous dose without my knowing it.

However, as it happened I was called away by a servant, who came up excitedly to tell me that Mrs. Dessalene was fainting in the drawing-room, having cut her finger badly. It was a very trifling matter I found when I went down, but it kept me occupied for some little time. When I returned to the sick-room I found that Sister Agnes and Captain Allis were both in the room, and that the Major, as usual after his improvements, had become perfectly unconscious.

"It is Captain Allis," I said to myself, and I felt that I should be almost justified in denouncing him publicly as poisoner; but al hough I was fully persuaded myself that he was the criminal, still I had not sufficient evidence, I knew, to convict him of the crime. So I resolved to watch and wait, only hoping that I should succeed in revealing his villainy in time to save the poor Major's life.

I was very pleased, then, when I was knocked up in the middle of Sunday night by a half-dressed servant, too excited to say anything but reiterate: "Captain Allis! Captain Allis! Will you please come to Captain Allis?"

By the time that I had unlocked the door the man was gone.

"The game is up. He is caught in the act!" I said to myself as I threw on my dressing-gown and prepared to cross the passage into the sick man's room.

I was suprised to find the door closed, and when I entered, it was only to find the sick-room undisturbed, and the patient lying in the most profound of his trances, while a monotonous snoring in the inner room told me that Sister Agnes had not been aroused.

My call had evidently nothing to do with my patient, and I left the room, somewhat disappointed, to seek out Captain Allis's chamber on the floor above. I had no difficulty in doing so, for the room was quite filled with a crowd of frightened and half-dressed servants and guests, all whispering together. The man who had roused me was just coming through the doorway, on his way to hurry me, and he beckoned me in excitedly.

"Please be quick, sir; he seems to be bleeding to death," he said, as I entered.

But the man was wrong. Captain Allis had bled to death fully half-an-hour before I bent over his body, as it lay cold and motionless in the bed. A great gash in the throat must have killed him almost instantaneously.

The butler pointed to a blood-stained razor lying on the dressing-table.

"It is suicide, I suppose, sir?" he said in a whisper; and I turned away from the bed to follow the direction of his finger.

"Has the razor been moved?" I asked.

"No, sir; I was the one to find him, smelling something burning—where you see the bed has been set on fire and smouldered a little"—he pointed at the tindered quilt as he spoke—"and the razor was there just as it is now."

"Then there is no question of suicide," I answered decisively. "No man could get from the dressing-table to the bed with that gash in his throat, much less stop to fire the bed. Cover up the body, and send for the police."

CHAPTER III.

Silax is Killed.

The murder of Captain Allis left me without a single theory to account for the illness of Major Dessalene. If the Captain had not been dosing him with opium, who could have done it? The wild thought occurred to me, of course, that Allis had been killed by some friend of the Major's, in order to prevent his poisoning the latter, but the idea was too extravagant, and there seemed to me nobody in the house sufficiently fond of Dessalene to defend him.

His wife was attentive, and spent most of her time at her husband's bedside; but she certainly had not the strength to kill the Captain as he had been killed.

It was probable that both crimes were the work of the same man, but why the criminal should choose slow poisoning in one case, and a speedy throat-cutting in the other, was a perfect puzzle to me. The whole case was so perplexing, that I was quite rejoiced when a detective from Scotland Yard came over to take the case in hand. The guests all cleared out rapidly. Even their enthusiasm for shooting, and Mrs. Dessalene's society, could not keep them in the face of this terrible tragedy to one of their number.

One guest alone remained at the earnest request, I understood, of Mrs. Dessalene, who was prostrated by this second mystery in the house, and nervously terrified at the thought of being left in it with none but strangers.

Sir Reginald Dyne, who seemed a manly, outspoken young fellow, gave me another reason for remaining at the house when the other guests had gone.

"I am told that some people suspect me of poisoning old Dessalene," he said frankly. "Everybody knows that there was no love lost between Allis and me, so I expect his murder will be put down to my charge also. Under the circumstances, I do not think it right to leave the house until I have done my level best to find out who really killed Captain Allis."

"Yes," I said doubtfully, thinking that two amateur detectives in additional to a professional one might cause complications; and my companion misinterpreted my hesitation.

"Perhaps you are one of those that suspect me?" he asked sharply.

I shook my head and laughed.

"No, I do not think you are the man to commit a murder," I answered quite truthfully. For the Baronet's manner had won my confidence entirely.

My trust in his innocence was not shared by Mr.

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Robin Silax, the gentleman from Scotland Yard, who had been provided with a room in the ever-hospitable house, to enable him more effectively to carry out his investigations. He informed me in a burst of sympathy that Sir Reginald and Mrs. Dessalene were managing the murdering business between them.

Mr. Robin Silax seemed to me very well fitted for a novelist; for he had worked out of the materials in his hands the plot for an interesting story. "Mrs. D—— is poisoning her husband," he said, "in order to marry her old love"—he had wormed the love-story out of old Diplock—"Captain Allis found out what she was doing and kept 'mum' in the hope of frightening madam into his hands. So the young Baronet had to 'pop off' the Captain to keep him quieter still and less embarrassing. I shall have them both in gaol in a week," he finished complacently.

"Of course, you have evidence to prove your case?" I said stiffly; because I liked both the persons he was accusing, and I did *not* like Mr. Robin Silax.

The detective took a pinch of snuff.

"I am collecting evidence," he said cheerfully, and pulling out a dingy letter-case handed me a letter to read.

"Tell me what you think of this," he said with another pinch of his abominable snuff, and I got halfway through the epistle before I realised that it must have been purloined from Mrs. Dessalene's possession. Then I handed it back, indignant with myself and him. I glanced at the date, however.

"That was written two years ago, before Mrs. Dessalene's marriage," I said.

"Possibly," returned Silax, his eyes twinkling wickedly, "but marriage does not put out red-hot love like that—marriage, that is, to another man. And it proves something; that the lady has kept the letter till now hidden away in the desk, which I took the liberty of investigating."

The man irritated me, and I turned away abruptly, sad at heart every time that I thought of the outpouring of love I had read, terrible in its earnestness; desperately pathetic, when I thought how that love had been blighted.

"Poor Dyne!" I kept saying to myself, and "Poor girl! poor girl!" when I thought of the woman who had treasured up that old letter, when to do so was a sin against the man she had married.

My idea of a detective, gathered, I will admit, entirely from books, is a man of perfect reticence, who in silence and secrecy builds up a chain of evidence from the merest trifles, until the chain is complete, then startles everybody by a result which appears nothing less than miraculous until the workings are shown.

Mr. Silax was as different as possible from this ideal sleuth-hound of the law. No sooner had he come across any small discovery, than he hurried to me with an account of it and a new and wonderful theory based upon it. He suspected in turn, as circumstances occurred to alter his opinion, every member of the household, and explained to me in detail what their object was in killing Captain Allis and poisoning Major Dessalene; and when he surprised me one night in the sick man's room, where I had gone in the course of my own researches, I could tell from his ominous silence and the manner in which he looked at me, that I in turn was enjoying the favour of his suspicions. I ought not to try and belittle the poor man, however, now that he is dead.

He came to me one night looking every inch the astute and unreadable detective of the story-books. His manner was altogether different from usual, and he even waited for me to ask how he was getting on. His answer, for once, almost impressed me.

"I am collecting evidence."

"I have got to the bottom of the case," he said quietly, "or rather, I have got the key. I will admit that it was more or less of an accident my finding it, but there is no doubting it this time. I have seen the person who doses Major Dessalene in the act."

"And who was it, man?" I said, almost excited.

"I cannot tell you just at present," he said, "but I think I shall be able to show you before to-morrow. I may wake you at any time in the night, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

His unusual reticence really impressed me, especially when I found that it was quite impossible to get any further information out of him about his discovery.

That night I lay awake quite a long while, wondering whether Silax would give me a call, and whether he had really obtained at last the key to the mystery which I was unable to solve. I did not fall asleep till after two, and then only slept for a couple of hours. As the clock in the turret was chiming the hour before striking four, I sat up suddenly wide-awake, with the certain conviction that something had happened, or was just about to happen.

My thoughts went, of course, to my patient, and I jumped out of bed at once, resolved to give him a call. A light burnt all night in the sick-room, so I did not trouble to strike a light, but felt my way into my slippers and dressing-gown.

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The passage outside my room was pitch dark, the Major's door being closed, and I made my way very gingerly across, afraid of making a noise and thus disturbing the criminal, whom I imagined for some reason to be at that very moment in the sick man's room.

Just outside the door, however, I stumbled over something, and, bending down to discover what it was, drew back suddenly, my hands warm and wet with a moisture that, in spite of my professional experience, made me turn sick and faint.

I rushed back to my room for matches, and returned, spilling them all over the place in my haste. When I managed to strike one I believe I looked at my hands first, and that prepared me for what I saw when I looked down. It was poor Silax, with a knife in his heart, and a little bottle of liquid opium in his clasped hand.

CHAPTER IV.

The Mystery is Cleared.

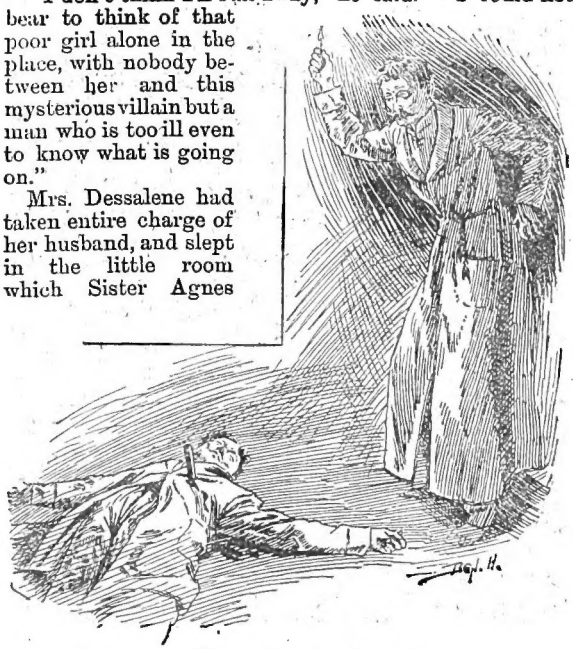
In the morning, when it became known that another murder had been committed in the house, the servants all left in a body. The nurse whom Dr. Diplock had engaged to attend on Major Dessalene went with them, although she would be expelled from her sisterhood for doing so. They said that an evil spirit was abroad in the house, and that no one could tell who would be its next victim. I did not share their superstitious belief, of course, but I felt that every person who remained in the house was menaced by a very great danger, and I determined to sleep with my door locked in future, and keep sharp look-out in walking about the house, especially after dark.

Sir Reginald Dyne still stayed on, although I felt bound to suggest to him that he would most likely be the next victim.

The Baronet smiled; we had ceased to laugh in that fateful house.

"I don't think I'll run away," he said. "I could not bear to think of that poor girl alone in the place, with nobody between her and this mysterious villain but a man who is too ill even to know what is going on."

Mrs. Dessalene had taken entire charge of her husband, and slept in the little room which Sister Agnes had occupied. I cannot speak too highly of her devotion and ability.



It was poor Silax, with a knife in his heart.

Mrs. Jagger, a very estimable old servant, who had nursed Mrs. Dessalene as a baby, and had accompanied her on her marriage to her new abode, proved the only noble exception in the general exodus of servants. If it had not been for her devoted courage, I suppose the Baronet and I would have had to take turns in cooking our meals, and fulfilling other necessary domestic duties in the house. With Mrs. Jagger's services, we managed very comfortably, and sat down solemnly to dinner together at our usual time, as if nothing extraordinary had occurred. Our hostess had begun to take all her meals in her husband's room.

Now that the circle had narrowed, the problem I had come to solve became more mysterious and exciting. If any other outrage occurred in the house, or if the Major's illness continued, either the miscreant must be some terrible being from outside, or dexterously hiding in the large rambling house, or it must be one of four persons. Of these four I knew that I myself was innocent, although I began to wonder what I might be capable of doing in my sleep. Then it seemed extremely hard to think that either Dyne or Clytie Dessalene, or her old servant, could possibly be guilty of such wholesale murder.

I am afraid we all considered the others with a little suspicion. I had my eyes on Sir Reginald every moment he was in my company, looking in vain for some slight indication of hidden madness or brutality under his pleasing exterior character. I made a point of inquiring specially into the history and character of Mrs. Jagger, and stayed awake a whole night considering the possibility of her committing a crime to aid a beloved mistress. In turn, I doubt not they were considering whether I had not used my presence in the house to satisfy some homicidal mania to which I might be subject, for all they knew.

So impossible was it, however, for us to seriously suspect each other, that the two women had taken to speaking in whispers of the "influence," while Sir Reginald Dyne and I made a complete search throughout the old house, and a careful examination of doors and shutters before retiring to rest.

We were left entirely to ourselves in the matter, for some hitch had arisen at Scotland Yard about sending down another man, and the local policeman who came making arrangements for the inquest, was visibly shivering all the time he was in the house.

The inquest on poor Silax was held at the Dessalene Arms, in the village where Dyne had had the body removed, in deference to Mrs. Dessalene's nervous horror of it. When I saw the Major, just before we started for the inn, he seemed much better than usual, and I began to hope that if he were really being poisoned the prisoner had departed with the servants. Perhaps, after all, it was one of them who had a grudge against his master, and had been obliged to kill both Captain Allis and the detective to avoid detection. I breathed more freely at the thought.

But a rough shock came next day at dinner, to which, as I said, Dyne and I sat down together. Usually we help ourselves to a glass apiece of the Major's '74 port after the meal, but on this occasion the Baronet declined this. He poured me out my glass, however, from the decanter, and handed it across to me, asking me some ordinary question or other as he did so. Luckily, I stopped to answer him before drinking the wine, and in doing so something in the scent of it made me

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suspicious. In an ordinary way I should not have taken any notice of the slight difference of perfume, but to-day all my senses were on the alert to discover danger; and so, instead of drinking my port, I took it upstairs with me to my room, decanter and all, leaving Sir Reginald staring at me in apparent astonishment. He came and tapped at my door ten minutes afterwards.

"What on earth is the matter, Doctor?" he asked, when I let him in. "Something the matter with the port?"

"Yes," I answered grimly. "Poison."

Sir Reginald started.

"You are quite sure of it?"

"Quite; the decanter has opium in it enough to kill six people."

He sat down on a chair and looked gloomily straight before him. Neither of us spoke for fully five minutes, while I went on with my rough analysis of the decanter's contents. Then my companion said gravely:

"This is a bad look-out for us. We shall not dare to eat or drink anything in the house."

"I was hoping 'he' had gone with the servants," I said. We always spoke of the mysterious murderer as "he."

Dyne cheered up a little.

"Perhaps 'he' put that poison in the decanter before he went," he said, as the bright idea struck him.

But I could not let him retain even that small consolation.

"I saw Mrs. Jagger filling the decanter yesterday morning," I said. "It is lucky we did not dine at home after the inquest."

"Then he is in the house still?" said Dyne in a whisper.

"Apparently."

There was another silence. Then the Baronet said meditatively:

"I never used to think myself a coward; but this mysterious business is taking the heart out of me. I don't like to be a moment alone in this house. I hate the idea of sleeping alone in it."

I had it on the tip of my tongue to invite him to share my bed, which was roomy enough. But up came the everlasting suspicion in time to stop me. No, I said to myself, one must lock one's door at night against *everybody*, if one wants to be safe; and when Sir Reginald Dyne went on to put the request straightforwardly into words, I made some excuse for refusing it. I advised him to lock both window and door when he went to bed, and luckily as it happened, he took my advice.

Mrs. Dessalene also promised to lock the door of her husband's room to secure them both from any midnight assailant. Mrs. Jagger needed no advice on the subject, so that half-past ten o'clock found the household ensconced in four separate strongholds, protected as well as possible from intrusion, both from outside and inside the house.

I felt so secure in my own defences that I slept soundly, for the first time since poor Allis's death.

In the dead of the night I was awakened by a quick tapping on my bedroom door. Jumping out of bed, I took the precaution of asking who was there before turning the key. It was Mrs. Dessalene's voice which replied, and when I had hastily made myself presentable and thrown open the door, in the light which I had kept burning all night in my room I found her standing, with bare feet and only a shawl thrown over her nightdress, appealing to me with a white, terrified face. Her yellow hair streamed down over her shoulders like a golden aureola, and even at that moment I thought what a lovely woman she was.

"Oh, please come," she was saying excitedly, "they have carried my poor husband away," and she led the way across the passage into the sick-room, where I had always seen Major Dessalene lying. Now his bed was empty.

Sir Reginald staring at me in apparent astonishment.

"I just woke," said Mrs. Dessalene, "and peeped out of my little room to see if all was right. And the door was open, although I locked and bolted it before I returned. Oh, tell me, what have they done to him? Where have they taken him?"

She seemed under the impression that the Major had been removed by some evil spirit, and terror was written on her face.

But to me the Major's disappearance came as a sudden revelation, and when poor Mrs. Dessalene cried again, wringing her hands: "Oh! where is he?" I answered excitedly, as I seized one of the big brass candlesticks, the nearest substitute for a weapon, and hurried from the room:

"Quick; he is upstairs—murdering Reginald Dyne!"

I got up the first flight of stairs as quickly as most men could do it, but Mrs. Dessalene was at the top first, and I had to seize her arm and pull her back.

"We must go carefully," I hissed into her ear, "or we shall both be killed as well;" and still I had to hold her with all my force to prevent her flying to her fate.

The Baronet's room was two flights above ours, and up the second flight we crept stealthily. Then we crouched, watching; for a man was at Dyne's door,

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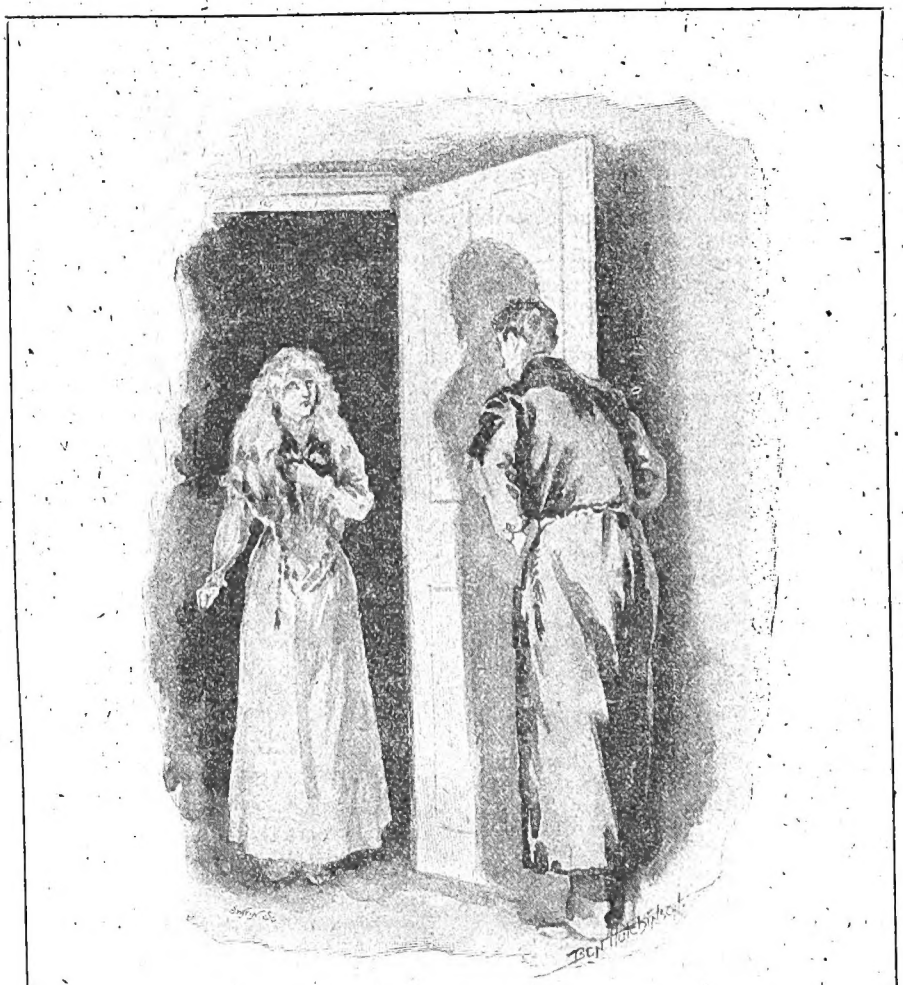
trying a bunch of keys one by one, carefully, noiselessly in the closed lock.

"Quick! For Heaven's sake do not let him get in," whispered the woman at my side. "Let me go and stop him if you are afraid."

I waited, in spite of this taunt even, until the right key was found and the door swung back. Then like a shot I was up the stairs and into the room behind the intruder. And still I was only just in time; for the Major was bending over the sleeping Baronet with a great knife—like the one which ended Silax's life—in his hand. He turned as I entered the room, and faced me, glaring at me malignantly. I ought to have struck him down instantly with the heavy brass candlestick in my hand, but I was too excited to do anything but fling myself upon him, dropping my weapon, and grappling for the knife in his hand. He fell back as I did so, and we struggled together like wild beasts on the bed, till poor Dyne, who was underneath us, awoke to see the strange scene, and collected himself sufficiently to take my part. After that the battle was soon decided, and Dyne, who was something of a sailor, managed to tie the Major up pretty effectively with the cording of his boxes.

It was only then that I had a chance of thinking of Mrs. Dessalene, whom I found in a swoon at the top of the stairs. Dyne carried her to the room of the fair Jagger, while I kept watch, with Dyne's revolver in my hand, on the imprisoned murderer, who lay foaming and chafing like some wild animal on the bed. When Dyne returned, we took him down to his own room, which had iron-bound windows (being easy of access for burglars from the conservatory), and locked him in there while Dyne dressed and went for further assistance.

For some reasons it was a pity we did so, since the



Appealing to me with a white, terrified face.

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poor wretch managed, in spite of his bonds, to get at his opium supply, and was dead by the time that the Baronet returned with some men from the nearest farm.

The opium supply was left uncovered—ten three-ounce bottles in a specially prepared recess in the woodwork of the bed. As the Major was dead this discovery was all that we had to help us in clearing up the mystery. With its assistance Diplock and I managed to put together a fairly probable explanation of the whole series of occurrences, which we had to be content with, since the chief actor was dead.

We put down the Major as the victim of a mad jealousy. The preparation of the recess and the storing of the opium showed that he must have made careful arrangements beforehand for his deception. So we thought that he had planned to collect at the house all the men who paid any attention to his wife at all, with the intention of killing them one by one. His own illness was arranged, of course, to remove him out of the range of suspicion, and he evidently knew how much opium he could give himself without endangering his life.

Poor Robin Silax, I suppose, must have really discovered the secret of the mystery. He had seen the Major dosing himself, and was coming to me with one of the bottles of opium, probably thinking the murderer asleep, when Dessalene jumped up, followed him, and killed him outside his door to preserve the secret, the preservation of which by that time was worth the effort. The knives must have been obtained especially, too, and hidden, since nobody had seen them in the house before. Their hiding-place, however, was never found. The poison had been placed in the decanter of port, of course, while we were away at the inquest, for Dyne's benefit.

Dropping my weapon, and grappling for the knife in his hand.

Such is the best solution which Diplock, Dyne, and I can give of the case, after considering all the details together. Possibly some of my readers may think of a better.

The whole case, of course, caused a great stir in the papers at the time, which some of you may remember, and the name of Dessalene became so notorious that within six months Mrs. Dessalene changed hers for that of Lady Reginald Dyne.

Herbert Flowerdew.

MEN! GIVE UP YOUR CIGARS,

LADIES! GIVE UP YOUR CHOCOLATES,

FOR ONE DAY,

And send what you would have spent on them to the FRESH AIR FUND. Ninepence pays for a day's happiness for one child. £8 2s. pays for a party of 200, with adults to look after them. The children are chosen from the most poverty-stricken quarters of the large towns throughout the kingdom, irrespective of creed.

Cast-off clothing, toys, boots, old coins—anything, in fact, that will realise money, however small the sum, will be gratefully acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

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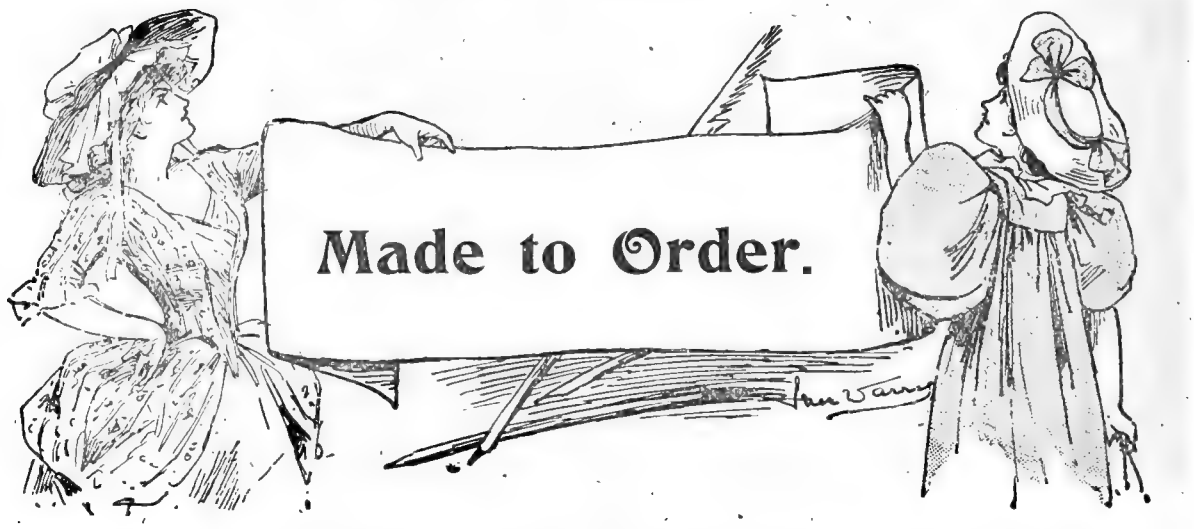

Made to Order.

Mr. Augustus Stead was an original genius from the land of the Elephant and Castle, and it is seldom that the Elephant produces so great a son.

He had been the idol of his fond mother, the pet of his respectable father, a small master printer, and the plaything of compositors: and at last, he was the *dux* of a small commercial academy, thanks to the large bones he had inherited from his father, the beef with which he had been early nourished, and the solid, plodding, phlegmatic habit of mind which made him certain to climb and to succeed.

Nature had endowed him with an admired type of face, a little after the high art of tailors' advertisements perhaps, and his moustache was obviously a triumph of cosmetics, but one must not be censorious.

Mr. Augustus Stead was also a literary genius, for contact with authors is very stimulating for young printers. He knew several reporters, and a leader writer for the Elephant's *Trumpeter*, the organ of progressive local thought.

Augustus was not only a remarkably steady young man, he was the superintendent of a Sunday-school, where he reigned in glory over a mixed assembly.

There was a mobile crowd of children beneath five or six fair and smiling lady teachers, with a crippled youth and a bald mechanic, and Augustus was king among them all.

He handled the large register with the air of some Norman William fingering Doomsday Book. When he rang a little muffin bell (consecrated by such uses and the touch of his royal hand), his grave severity would have quelled the ribald mirth even of Pantaloon's own children, had they been present; but he would relax a little and unbend at the teachers' meeting, where he coached his team, if one may dare to say so, against next week's effort.

He would also hold long and intimate conversation with the teachers about individual scholars—at least, this honour was accorded to the ladies—and he would drink tea with them in turns at their fathers' houses.

Each lady in turn was talked about as a possible Mrs. Augustus Stead; but though they were all worthy girls, Augustus was wise. He came and saw and meditated upon their virtues, but his heart remained whole.

The prettiest ones were unfortunately the humblest in rank. The best teachers were lacking in the outward and formal adornments of mere beauty, and had no countervailing charm of personality to amend the yellowness of their skins.

Miss Goldstein, the piano-maker's daughter, was passing rich on £50 a year pin-money, and she could afford velvet and ostrich feathers; but unfortunately she had a hare lip, with a good deal of hair on it, too.

It was libel for Miss Jones to call her the cavalry officer; but the future Mrs. Stead must have no moustache, he felt.

He had not found his ideal, as he constantly told his friends. The older he grew, the more impossible did it seem to find that not impossible she who should fulfil his expectations, and be worthy to accept his hand and share his throne.

Two things conspired to banish her from actual life. First, he had a rising sense of his own uniqueness; and, secondly, his uncle, a most respectable poulterer, of Leadenhall, was rising rapidly in the social scale, and therefore it was the more necessary that the nephew of a liveryman should walk discreetly.

There was a sweet child in Miss Goldstein's class, with a thick head of glossy hair, beautiful, especially when it had been washed with soda, and brushed. Her manner was timid, and yet frank. She had won the first prize for running on school feast-day.

She was affectionate, and would slip her hand into Augustus' palm and walk with him. She always dropped the handkerchief upon him, at that fatuous sport. She was a most regular scholar, and always learnt her lessons.

Her name was Violet Howard, and she had no kith or kin (except an old grandmother) who could interfere with any plans for her future greatness.

Augustus made a decree that Violet Howard should be selected and used as the raw material out of which his ideal should be made to order. It is needless to say that he did not consider that she, too, being not born of a stock or of a tree, but being also human, might possibly have an ideal of her own to which he might fairly be asked to conform. Pooh! a chit like that would have no business to make demands upon a man such as Augustus Stead. Out upon it! Was he not already ideal enough for any maid? And besides, is the free soul of man, and, above all, of a superintendent

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to be fitted perforce to any bed of Procrustes called an Ideal?

Augustus, like Napoleon and other great men, was rapid in his actions. He resolved, as he chewed a quill in office hours; and his plan was wise and easy. He knew a decayed gentlewoman in Surrey, who was pensioned by her friends.

Violet should board with her, partly as companion, partly as pupil. He, the great one, should pay for the girl's board, and the decayed one should educate her in the ways of the truly genteel.

The plan was well conceived. Grandmother Howard thanked him for finding so good a place; Mrs. Chapman was grateful for a free companion and help, whom she might use as a servant at a pinch; Miss Goldstein was relieved of a "forward and inquisitive" pupil; and, of course, Violet herself would be more than grateful when she knew the end. She would repay her exaltation with the enthusiasm of a life of cheerful service.

For two years and a half Mr. Augustus Stead was a happy man.

He made a point of spending two evenings a week in Surrey, where he examined his pupil in good learning and piety. The decayed gentlewoman had a decayed piano, and Violet practised wild melodies upon it, and learnt to accompany Augustus in his rather slow and flat rendering of his wish to be a butterfly and other enviable things.

There was great insistence upon the letter 'h'; a little French was added, and physical geography, with some excursions into history, including the dates of the Conquest, the Edict of Nantes, and Waterloo. Divinity, too, was most carefully studied in the lives of Gideon, Ahab, and Nathaniel, and St. Paul's missionary journeys.

Happy conscious Augustus! Happy unconscious Violet! And since the design was still unknown, we may add that the Sunday-school teachers, who still hoped and adored, were happy too. But pleasant dreams, even though they endure for thirty revolving months, must end at last.

Violet was eighteen to the day, Augustus, twice her age, when he explained to her the splendour which was in store for her, in a long, formal speech.

He touched upon the cheerful steadiness of her behaviour, her clean habits, her personal comeliness, her quickness of learning, her assiduous attention to duty.

"And so, dear girl," he said in a prize-giving voice, "I have determined to ask you to be Mrs. Augustus Stead."

She heard him without any show of surprise. Indeed, she had expected this long ago, and yet, actually, some light, quick tears stood in her round eyes, no doubt tears of gratitude. She did not spring up from her chair as he had expected, but on the contrary, she said:

"Thank you, Mr. Stead. I—I'm not in love with anybody else, and, of course, if you think it best——"

He then unbent a little and dried her tears, bade her sit upon his knee, which she did; and in a little time she laughed and became quite cheerful, and tried on the tan gloves (at 2s. 11½d.) which he had bought for her birthday and forgotten to give her, and she asked him very archly for a troth ring.

Indeed, she was a sweet and innocent young thing, and he could not but feel that, except for her almost babyish way of looking at things, she would be a most satisfactory consort, for she was in every respect made to order.

But, alas! marriage is a lottery indeed, and Mr. Stead soon bewailed the revolting ingratitude of womankind. First of all, the teachers, though they dismissed him with a heavy marble clock emblazoned with a nickel tablet, quite brutally refused to take any further interest in him. Then he was distinctly disappointed. Mrs. Stead's first offence was to show an unbecoming and snubbing disposition towards the whole body of the lady teachers. And next she actually told her own Augustus that he was selfish and lacking in taste, and once she added that he was a toady—"a word no respectable woman ought to use," he told her.

But the following unfeeling and undated letter from one of his old schoolfellows, will reveal to the curious the full guilt of the ungrateful girl:

DEAR EMMIE,—After all, I went to call on old Gus and his pretty wife at Peckham. My word! She's lovely, and just exactly the thing for him. You know his way of riding the high horse? She simply won't stand it, and he has to behave himself like an ordinary mortal. If he prophesies, as you call it, she simply laughs at him in the prettiest way, and if he begins any of those tedious old yarns of his, she just remembers the point for him, and then gets him away before he bores one to death. She's awfully clever, too, and makes him read to her while she sews. In fact, you'd hardly know him again, he's ever so much nicer. Every one likes her awfully, and thinks her too good for him, but he's not such a brute as he was by any means. He's rather brutal to her, but she keeps him in jolly good order without jumping on him. He solemnly told Tom he was unhappy for the first three years, but is now resigned to his fate. She has made him shave off his moustache. Do let's go and call together soon. I want you to know her.—Yours, R. V.

P.S.—He boasted that he had her made to order. She seems made to order him.

C. L. MARSON.

A GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY by JOAN BARRETT,

ENTITLED

"A BROKEN VOW,"

WILL START NEXT WEEK.

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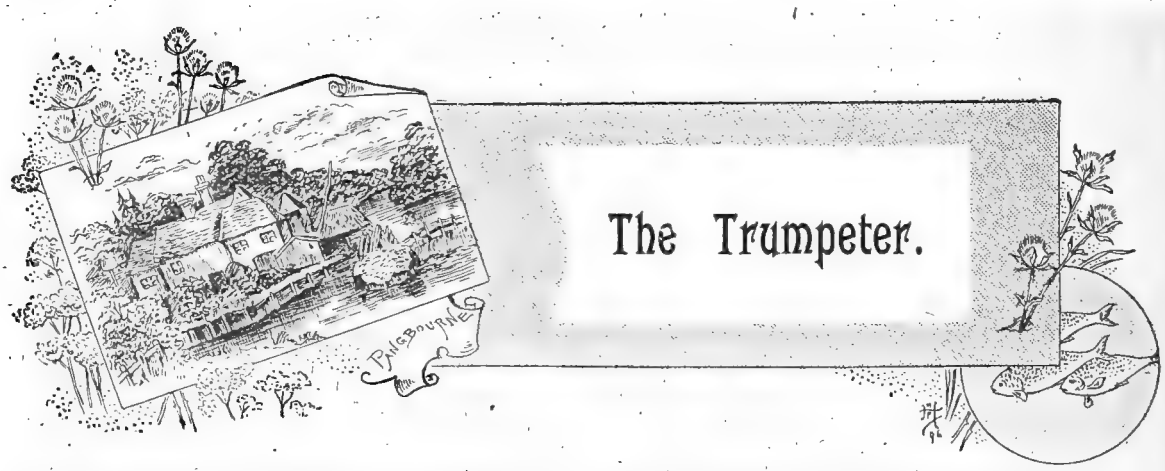

The Trumpeter.

Those who have not assisted in great battles, and know of them only from brilliant description, have little idea of these desperate conflicts, where the massed armies launched against each other struggle through the whole day in an atmosphere of flame and iron rain.

Dwelling upon the victorious result, they ignore the uncertainties, the detours and the unexpected happenings of these terrible days. Reading in the narratives of historians of the strategy of generals, one is led to believe that all that takes place is like a parade—a kind of mathematical chess carried on by players who have soldiers for pawns. It is necessary to take part in this *mêlée* to understand the sanguinary chaos. The plan of a battle, so easy to follow in a history, cannot be comprehended so clearly upon the ground. Enveloped in clouds of dust and smoke, one knows nothing of what is transpiring around him, distinguishes with difficulty a corps of friends from that of enemies, and dies without becoming aware with which side rests the advantage. Each one does his duty blindly, and often knows of victory but from the order of the day.

It was thus with certain regiments at Auerstadt. The Prussians, who presented a battle front of six leagues, were attacked along the whole line at nearly the same time, and there resulted a series of conflicts which led, as one may say, to two battles, one won by Napoleon, the other by Marshal Davoust.

Our company, sent into one of these encounters, was successful after a struggle of several hours, and drove the enemy from a village which they abandoned only after it was set on fire. I was pursuing the last skirmishers, who were retiring towards the wing commanded by the Prince of Hohenlohe, when in scaling an inclosure I was struck by a musket ball which knocked me over and caused me to lose consciousness almost instantly.

When I regained my senses I found myself alone at the foot of the wall I had attempted to climb. The other houses were still burning; some dead bodies were dispersed here and there, and there could be heard in the distance the boom of cannons and the crack of musketry.

I partially arose, and with difficulty drawing myself upon my knees, sought to discover some near point to which to proceed for succour; but all was silence. Evidently the battle had concentrated itself in the two extremities of the enemy's line, and I was abandoned.

This conviction, together with the blood I had lost, reduced my courage. I saw myself condemned to perish miserably amidst this ruined hamlet. However, I made a last effort to gain a small isolated dwelling, which seemed the only one that had escaped destruction.

The inhabitants had obviously abandoned it before the approach of the two armies, for it was entirely vacant. The Prussian soldiers, who had bivouacked there the preceding night, had broken the furniture up for fuel. I found but the four walls and scattered *débris*.

Of all the sufferings I endured, that of thirst was the most intolerable. In crossing the court I had perceived a well, but it was deep; I had no means of drawing from it, and, like a true Tantalus, it was in vain for me to bend towards this water the lips that could not reach it.

I was at the end of my strength and courage. My leg, stiff from the bleeding of the wound, did not permit me to take another step. Everything began to swim before my eyes; a coldness seized me, and darkness came on. I gained a corner of a room on the ground floor, where I fell, groaning. A sort of numbness dulled the pains which penetrated my body: I gradually lost the perception of my suffering.

I had, as might be said, accepted my miserable situation as one buried alive.

A considerable time elapsed. I thought that all was at an end for me, when a step sounded at the door of the cottage. With an effort I raised my head and tried to give a cry for help, but my voice was extinguished between my teeth, convulsively set together. I could only perceive by the lingering evening light a trumpeter of our regiment, who was about to enter, seemingly himself seeking shelter. He crossed the porch with caution, and looking into the depths of the apartment, perceived me.

"A comrade," he cried, approaching me. "I see you have had a bad encounter. Some ball wanted to chat with you too near. But how happens it that you are alone here, far from the ambulances?"

I attempted to explain what had occurred.

"I understand—I understand," he replied. "The company has followed its course without regarding those who have been left behind. It is the same with mine, which, drawn to the left wing, was set on by a regiment of cavalry and swept so far away that I was not able to regain the detachment."

"Where is the fighting?"

"I don't know. When I found myself alone and night approaching, I thought of seeking a nook in which to rest till morning. Only I expected to fall into a better

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place than this. There does not seem to be much luxury of furniture here—the planks for a feather bed and the walls for covering. You have found your couch a little military."

I replied with chattering teeth that such a trifle mattered little to a dying man.

"Fie, fie," interrupted the trumpeter, approaching me. "Die because of a damaged stump? I'll wager you are thirsty!"

"I burn!"

"I will go and draw some water from the well."

He turned towards the doorway, when I cried to him that the bucket was broken and the rope removed.

"No matter," said he. "I must try other means. It shall never be said that one Frenchman allowed another to die for want of drink."

He went out and I turned my face to the wall, certain that his endeavours would be useless. The length of his absence led me even to believe that he had departed, but at length he reappeared, bearing his shako within his hands; it was transformed into a water bucket; from the chin strap depended a long withe in place of rope.

"Victory!" he cried. "We have the fluid! I have been gone some time. The merchants of this place having shut up their shops, it was needful to fabricate something; but at last I am here. Drink in discretion."

He presented the shako to me, and I drank with avidity. He then informed me that the cannons had ceased to make themselves heard; the battle was ended, and, according to all appearance, to our advantage, for the line occupied the previous evening by the Prussians as bivouac had been abandoned. We need only to wait till morning for succour.

While giving me some encouraging details the trooper sought about us for means of rendering our condition less painful. The night wind which penetrated the apartment through the door and broken window froze me. He departed for a few minutes, and reappeared with several old bundles of straw which he fastened over the apertures so securely as to defend us against the cold.

He bathed and dressed my wound, declaring it to be a good one, and likely to make me a major. I allowed him to do all this without resisting, and also without thanking him. I was so cast down by my misfortunes that I had lost the instinct of self-preservation. Lying upon the earth in my obscure corner, I awaited the end of my sufferings with more of longing than of fear.

The trumpeter, who had rested a moment, bent over me and shook his head.

"My comrade has not much desire for life," he murmured. "Yet, nevertheless, the wound is nothing—a little lead in the shank. These poor quarters have beaten down his moral courage. Cannot I enable him to sleep more decently?"

He made the tour of the chamber, mounted to the storey above, and descended without having found anything.

As for myself, plunged into a half somnolent state, I followed his movements as seen in a mist. At intervals I lost all sense of his presence; then I perceived him again without comprehending what he was doing. He seemed now to me to be examining a partition which divided this lower room into two parts. He set himself to demolish it. First I saw fall under his sabre the light pine carpentry work; then he detached some large pieces of packing cloth. Here there ensued a blank. When I regained consciousness of what was going on, the trumpeter was returning from outside, and the packing cloth had been transformed by him into a pallet which he had stuffed with moss and leaves. I saw him extend it along the wall; he came to me and assisted me to rise, and soon afterwards I felt myself lying upon this improvised bed, and speedily fell asleep.

I was awakened by a sensation of gentle warmth. A fire burnt brightly upon the hearth, where the trumpeter had heaped the fragments of the partition. I raised myself with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

"Ah! this resuscitates you!" he cried gaily. "You see there are always means of ameliorating one's condition if time is not wasted in contemplating the buttons of one's gaiters."

"You are a magician!" I cried.

"A little, my friend," he replied, as he manufactured a seat from the remnants of the broken woodwork; "but it is white magic, with a wand having four fingers and a thumb. You think perhaps that I lit this fire merely for warmth—that it is a parlour fire? You are in error, my dear fellow; this is a fire to cook by, and destined to be a pot-boiler."

"They have distributed rations to your company then?" I said.

"Cartridge rations," responded the trumpeter. "But we can't eat them. We shall take some from the Prussians."

"Where do you expect to find their food?"

"Where? Why here. Do not the vanquished feed the vanquishers?" Understanding my gesture of doubt, he continued: "Ah, you have not much confidence in their larder, have you? The fact may be that the locality is a little bare, but a true Frenchman never despairs. Provided his general distributes to him his share of glory, it is for him to procure something to eat. At the time when I was gathering in the garden those dry leaves to make you a bed of eider-down, I perceived some little heaps in a corner. They suggested potatoes. I dug into them with my steel, and exposed to the light of day some twenty of these virtuous tubers. The whole lot are under the ashes there, and ought to be already cooked. We will, in consequence, proceed to feast. Oh! master of the hotel, say grace at once, and serve up hot!"

As he repeated this army phrase in the tone of a master of ceremonies, the trumpeter drew forth, one after another, from underneath the coals, the smoking potatoes, and ranged them symmetrically upon the hearth.

I had eaten nothing since morning. The savoury odour had awakened my hunger. I made an effort to sit up, and was about to partake of the supper prepared by the trumpeter, when I saw him all at once lift his head and listen.

"What is it?" I asked.

He imposed silence by a gesture, rose quickly, caught up his gun which he had placed against the wall, and advanced rapidly towards the door.

At this moment, I, in my turn, distinguished the sound of footsteps outside. Suddenly they became silent, as if the person were approaching with distrust. At last, however, they paused on the threshold. There was an interval, then a hand lifted gently the straw which closed the entrance; a man dressed in the costume of the country appeared at the opening; he looked within and made a step forward.

The trumpeter's gun was at his shoulder and arrested him promptly. He recoiled with a cry.

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"Make one movement and you are dead!" said the soldier.

The German clasped his hands and stammered forth a prayer for quarter.

"Do not fire!" I cried to my companion. "He asks for mercy."

"I understand that," replied the trumpeter; "but it is necessary to know what brings him hither."

"Let him approach; I will speak with him," I said.

"So you know German? Bravo. Then we are going to have some prattle. Come, deliver yourself up, *mein Herr*, to this person you see here who speaks your savage language. Ask him who he is, whence he comes, what he wants, and, if possible, procure some butter for our potatoes."

Thus speaking, he forced the German to advance towards me.

When the stranger perceived that I was wounded he expressed much compassion, and asked over and over again where I was hurt, if I were in pain, whether I would not be able to gain the French encampment.

The last question led me to believe that the Prussians had retreated all along their line. The trumpeter, to whom I imparted this good news, cried: "Long live the Emperor!" and presented arms. The German stated also that he had quitted the burning hamlet the same morning, and that the only house remaining, the one in which we found ourselves, was his. As to the reason of his coming here in the midst of so much danger, and at such an hour, he appeared embarrassed to explain it and became involved in confused statement.

However, my companion appeared to rest contented with the information given, and invited him, with a sort of soldierly cordiality, to approach the fire.

"We have broken up the barracks a little," added he, "but that was your fault. You should have left the key to your wood-shed."

The German excused himself, through me, saying that all had been consumed by the Prussians, who occupied the village.

It was with difficulty that he had been able to transport some furniture and other effects which had escaped pillage to the house of a relative who dwelt at some distance, and who had consented to receive his family.

"Yes, yes," said the trumpeter, "one knows that. In the time of the Republic the Austrians came thus into France; they were quartered in our village, and my mother tells what the poor people had to undergo. War is good enough for the soldier; he returns the blows he receives, but the home dweller is always the sufferer, and it is necessary that he pay the expense. Seat yourself, my old friend, and if your heart allows, eat, drink, and shelter yourself. You may act as in your own house."

This nonsensical joviality of the soldier reassured the German more than would any amount of protestations. He seated himself upon the bench, and after some moments of conversation, cried:

"Upon my soul, gentlemen, you are worthy men."

"As one of those worthy men, I feel flattered," said my companion, blowing upon a very hot potato.

"Though I am ruined, I should like to treat you as my guests," continued the villager. "Wait for me here."

"We will wait for you, gladly."

He crossed the room, entered the shed which adjoined it, and remained there some time. The trumpeter carelessly hummed to himself, without appearing to wonder what the other might be doing. Finally, after a long absence, the German reappeared with a small bottle of brandy.

"It is the last," he said. "I hid it from the Prussian Hussars. But I could not find a better occasion to drink it than now."

"It comes in good time," exclaimed the trumpeter joyously. "Here's to the health of the Emperor Napoleon. You are not obliged to propose him, *mein Herr*. Each may celebrate his saint, it is said; and we, who are of the *grande nation*, we have the right to drink to the Little Corporal."

He had uncorked the bottle, to which he made a long application. He passed it to me. I took a draught; then it was the German's turn.

The effect of this fiery liquor was not long in showing itself. Our blood began to circulate with great rapidity, and the frugal supper concluded as if it were a feast.

When the bottle was empty the villager rose, and spoke of departing. He was in haste to announce to his wife and children that the house had escaped the general conflagration. I urged him to set forth without delay, and the trumpeter joined his entreaties to mine. The German wished us all manner of prosperity, gained the door, and disappeared.

When the sound of his footsteps was lost in the distance the trumpeter, who was filling his pipe by the hearth, looked towards the door, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Simple fellow," said he, laughing, "to believe I was hoodwinked!"

"What do you mean?" I asked, astonished.

"Do you suppose I let myself be caught in his explanations? He has known since morning that his 'cage' had not been burnt, so that he need not have come to assure himself of it."

"But what then do you suppose his intention to have been?"

"His intention? Why it is as clear as spring water. When the Prussians came this man hid his hoard in some corner."

"What! You suppose——"

"I am sure of it. I saw, and when he came out of the shed with the bottle, that the pockets of his blouse were stuffed full. I appeared not to observe this, lest he might believe that one would rather drink treasure than brandy; but happily I have no hunger for such bread. We are soldiers and not despoilers of peasants. If ever I return home I wish to enter there saying: 'Nothing in my hands and nothing in my pockets.' All I ask is to have the chance of wearing on my breast as decoration, a little ribbon."

"And you merit it," I cried, extending to him my hand. "While you have been here you have shown proof to me of the humanity and ingenuity of the French soldier, and I now know of his honour."

C. A. Shaw.

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Short Stories

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Here you have the next ten pictures. Write down the names in the spaces provided, and keep your list until another set has appeared. **DON'T SEND THEM IN UNTIL TUESDAY, APRIL 27,** *next.*

You may forward as many attempts as you like, but each set of five must be in a separate envelope, and will be considered separate attempts.

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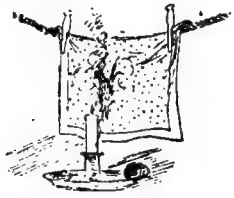

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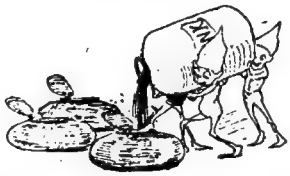

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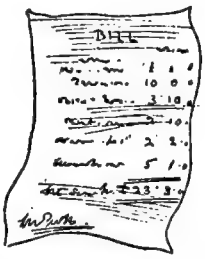


No. 36.....

No. 37.....

No. 38.....

Remember these Things.

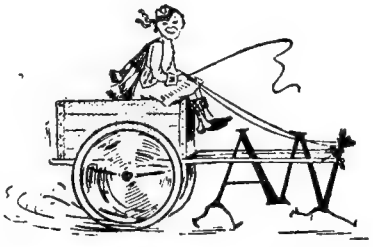
YOUNG PEOPLE should compete and get their elders to help them.

If there is any picture you cannot name some friend may be able to give you the information.

You need only give the surnames of the people, except in cases where the christian names are depicted.

Name.....

Address.....



No. 39.....

No. 40.....

There are plenty of sources from which you can obtain a list of the names of M.P.'s.—Whitaker's Almanack, the London Post-Office Directory, Hazell's Annual, and publications of that sort. They will help you to win.

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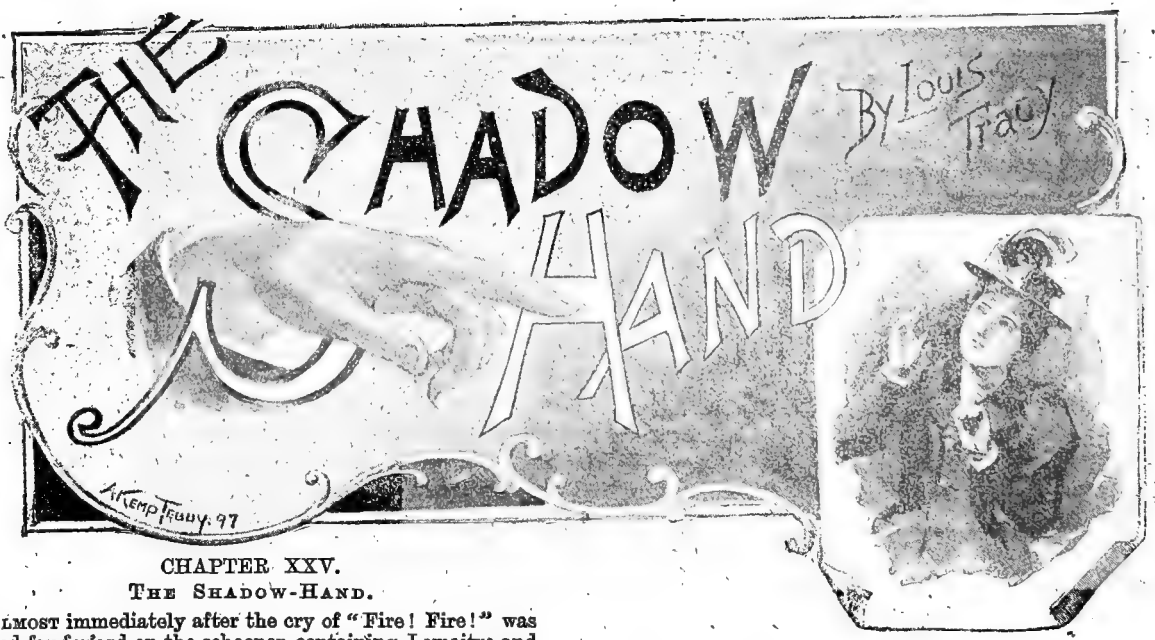

CHAPTER XXV.

The Shadow-Hand.

Almost immediately after the cry of "Fire! Fire!" was raised far for'ard on the schooner containing Lemaitre and Cécile, the whole oil-laden ship might be said to burst into flame. The schooner carried a cutter on her stern-davits, and a light gig on her bow-davits. These, with frightful haste, the men managed to lower and bring round to the starboard side, amidships. There was an instant danger that the boats would be swamped, for now they were towering up on a level with the ship's beam, and now weltering far down under her copper-line, and at what moment the burning schooner would blow up and vanish before their eyes, no one knew.

The men tumbled pell-mell into the boats, one of the first to jump into the gig being the captain. Suddenly the huge form of Lemaitre, half-dressed, with wild eyes and rumpled hair, appeared in the glare, rushing up the companion-way towards the boats, and immediately behind him Cécile. The men stared at her, as though they saw a ghost. But without hesitation, without waiting for help, she leapt upon the cutter which was then nearest the ship, and already contained six men. She was caught by the strong arms of a stalwart bo'sun, and the cable of the cutter was at once loosed.

The difficulty was Lemaitre. The huge weight of his jump would swamp almost any boat if he alighted at all on her side. The remaining five of the ship's crew were already in the gig with the captain, and Lemaitre stood alone at the ship's side in an agony of hesitation, swaying forward and back. Suddenly he seemed to have gone mad. "Wait! Wait for me!" he bellowed. "I have forgotten!" He rushed backward toward the companion-way.

"Oh, the man's mad!" cried the captain. "Push off!"

Lemaitre by that time had dived down into the cabin. He was thrown back by the scorching breath of the flames, but with a rapid dash he rushed forward again, stifling under the reeky, flame-stained whirl of the smoke. He came to his cabin door, fighting hard for life, dashed in, and seized his overcoat. It contained the bulk of his fortune and the photograph of his murdered wife.

In hardly more than a minute from the time he had left it he was again at the ship's side. But he was no longer Lemaitre—he was Danton. The fire had singed away every particle of his disguise. As he stood there in the bright glare, Cécile, a cable's length away, her eyes fixed upon him, saw into and knew him—knew him utterly, and the secret of his life. The gig had just pushed off. He made a wild leap and fell into the sea.

But his hand caught the gunwale, and the men managed to draw him in.

As the oars of the two boats began to ply, and they moved apart, Cécile stood up unsteadily, lifted her voice shrilly above the screaming wind, and sent forth these words upon the night:

"Edith is the daughter of the woman you murdered!"

And Armand Lemaitre heard them as distinctly as though a thousand spirits had shrieked them into his ear.

* * * * *

They were not many miles from the coast, and though every moment in danger of foundering, before night of the next day the cutter, with Cécile, made for a small fishing town called La Piblouette, where her crew were kindly treated and carted to Dinan, where they took train for Calais. The gig, further south with the captain and Lemaitre, was dashed upon a reef near the coast-wall, and foundered. Lemaitre, who had taken no part in the labour of rowing, was practically fresh, and saved himself by swimming. He reached the sands under cover of night. The others were drowned.

If Lemaitre had planned these details in order to wipe out his identity, he could not accomplish them more effectually. The world henceforth must believe him dead.

The first thing which Cécile did on reaching Calais was to telegraph to Jack Heathcote in Paris. Poor Jack, having no notion where she was, was dying of desolation.

"Edith," she wired, "may be at D.'s château near Avignon. I go there straight to look. You come too. Search hotels of Avignon for me. Don't know names."

While she was travelling south from one point, from another Mr. Hawke was also speeding by train to seek Danton. Hawke had had a great misfortune—one drunken night he had run through nearly £5,000 at the gaming-table, and was now nearly penniless. He had last heard from Danton from the château, and having written lately and received no reply, he was anxiously hastening after fresh supplies, half afraid that Danton had given him the slip.

He reached the château in the forenoon; Cécile towards

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evening. Jack Heathcote had not yet arrived at Avignon. Cécile, with hurrying heart, walked through the park, up the vast low terraces of the lawn to the wide-fronted old house. Was she about—at last—to see Edith? The first words which she heard from a servant in the hall drove the blood to her heart: Edith had been there—and had gone!

"Where to?" asked Cécile.

"To Italy, I believe, mad'moiselle."

"What part?"

"I do not know at all."

"And no one is here but servants?"

"Dr. Danton is here, mad'moiselle."

"Dr. Danton—*here?*"

She could not believe her ears. Pieces of the gig, in which Lemaitre was supposed by all France to have perished, had been picked up on the shore.

"He is here, mad'moiselle. He arrived early this morning on foot."

"Did he wear his own clothes?"

"His own clothes? Certainly."

"The reason I ask is because I know that he has lately suffered shipwreck. Dr. Danton—is a friend of mine, you know. When I last saw him he wore a mauve-coloured overcoat. Had he that on when he arrived?"

"I think so — yes, decidedly."

"Where is he now?"

"In his bedroom."

"Is that on this side of the house?"

"Yes. The central room of the suite opening on the corridor on the first floor, just overhead."

"Well, will you announce me? I wish to see him. But I cannot wait, tell him: if he keeps me waiting two minutes I must run away, and come back to-morrow."

"I *fear* he won't be able to see you to-day. He is very strange, unwell. But I will announce you. What name?"

"Mademoiselle Huguenin."

The servant led the way to one of the rooms of Danton's suite above, and left her. The sending of the false name in to Danton was merely a trick of Cécile's to get rid of the servant; and when the latter came back to say that Dr. Danton could see no one that day, Cécile was nowhere to be seen.

"She was, truly, in a hurry to be off!" said the servant.

But what was the matter with Lemaitre? Had he triumphed so far on every hand only to come home to die of the vengeance of the murdered dead? Had he seen a vision? Had he caught a glance into hell?

"Do not leave me, Hawke—be a good, kind friend to me, Hawke, won't you? Do not leave me, man! I will brain you if you move a step from me——"

As he chased rapidly to and fro in the room he clutched continually at Hawke's sleeve. He walked like a drunken man, with bare feet, in shirt and trousers, one brace fallen over his arm. His eyes had in them the far-away stare of a state of trance, as though he saw some awful invisible thing continually before him. His sharp white teeth chattered.

"Edith is the daughter of the woman you murdered," he said continually over and over—"the daughter of the woman you murdered—of the woman you—— Ah, Julie! Julie! Spare me, good Julie! Do not look so——"

"Come, mate, pull yourself together!" Mr. Hawke kept saying. "Who would have thought, now, of ever seeing *you* with the D.T.'s!"

Cécile, concealed behind a huge escritoire in the drawing-room was thinking that Lemaitre, at last, beyond the tricks of chance, had achieved his ends. His past existence was buried. The crew of the cutter, she knew, had not even noticed that when he came to the ship's side a second time he was a man stripped of a disguise. The cutter's crew would be utterly unable to identify Danton with Lemaitre; and the gig's crew had perished. She was the only living witness in the world; in addition to her there was the overcoat, and there was the photograph in its pocket. And it was the coat and the photograph that she had determined at all costs, at whatever peril, to get at once—that night—if Lemaitre had not already had the cunning to destroy them.

Cécile shrank, in blanched terror, backwards.

Unfortunately, the coat and photograph were no more. Danton, in a paroxysm of his new frenzy, had, soon after his arrival that morning, consigned both to the flames. At every point, therefore, he was the master of events.

Cécile waited till every sound in the house was still. The room in which she stood was utterly dark. She reasoned that, as the coat was worn only that morning, it would now be found merely hanging on a peg, not put away anywhere. When she thought that it was about midnight she crept from her hiding-place. She had carefully noticed the position of the bedroom. Her heart beat fast, but not with fear.

Suddenly, as she stepped from behind the escritoire there was a sound—a sudden light blinded her—and before her, framed in a doorway, stood Dr. Lemaitre, looming huge in a long, white night-robe, holding a lamp in his hand.

Cécile shrank, in blanched terror, backwards. His face was toward her. Were his dreadful eyes searching her in her crouching panic? No—his eyes were closed.

He was fast asleep. But on his convulsed and distorted visage was a look of such ghastly horror that the girl for a moment could not bear the sight. She turned her face away.

With long, slow, spectre-like stalk he came straight toward her. She could have shrieked aloud in the tension of her affright. But when Lemaitre came near, instead of touching her, he moved a chair to the leaf of the escritoire, sat down, and took pen, ink and paper. All the time he was looking upward, upward, with closed eyes, as the blind look upward, with eyeballs groping for the light. A low, continuous, whimpering murmur came from his lips.

He commenced to write, with closed eyes still poring upward upon the vision he saw. Every word he wrote he repeated aloud with his lips. Cécile crept behind him, overpeeping his shoulder.

"Julie," he wrote, "take your hand from mine. I will write as you will—but take your hand from mine. God! how purple is your murdered face, Julie! And your hand—your hand, Julie—ah, take it from mine; it is colder than

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a thousand deaths. I will write as you say; I murdered you in a train between York and Scarborough in England; I cast your body into a ravine. I was seen by a man called Hawke, who was concealed beneath the seat of the carriage. I have kept him in my pay. I told your Edith, your daughter—yours, Julie—ah, that was a bitter fate, my wife! —I told her that Hawke was her father, not knowing who her mother was. I caused her to fly from her home. And she is now at the Casa Calvo, near Lake Como. I have finished. I have confessed. I am ready to die.—Armand Lemaitre."

Cécile stood behind Lemaitre, and behind Cécile stood

He was close upon her.

another crouching figure, watching her. It was Hawke. He had been sleeping on a sofa beside Lemaitre's bed, and waking up and missing him, had come out, and stood staring bewildered at the sight he saw. He soon realised, however, what was happening; Lemaitre was asleep. Who the girl was he could not guess; but he felt that she was an enemy.

Slowly he drew from the pocket of his trousers a large knife, and crept nearer. Some of the words murmured by Lemaitre he heard. That document in the hands of the police would mean ruin for himself. As Lemaitre ended, and Cécile put out her hand to take up the sheet, Hawke, with a cry, with uplifted knife—rushed forward to stab her.

Hawke's cry saved Cécile. She, too, glancing backward, uttered a scream—and dodged the blow. The paper was in her hand, and she darted for the door. Hawke was after her. Outside the darkness was not quite complete owing to the light from the open door. Cécile dashed down the great staircase. "I'll pin you like a fly, you little beast!" panted Mr. Hawke. He was close upon her; half-way down the stairs he was so near that he snatched a handful of hair from the back of her head. The rest of the stairs Cécile cleared at one leap. This was a feat impossible to heavy Hawke. Yet he rolled and plunged downward at an agile rate, bent upon nothing less than murder.

Cécile flew towards the front portal. But this was precisely the point for which she feared. If it were bolted? She knew that a moment's delay meant the loss of all. As she rushed along, her fingers struck out against a chair near-by. She seized, and placed it quickly in Hawke's way. The darkness was now utter, and the next moment Hawke was on his chest on the marble floor.

Cécile reached the front portal; to her joy it was not bolted, only locked. She drew back the spring, and by the time Hawke had come up, she banged the door in his face, and started running over the lawn.

But he was still close behind her with his uplifted knife; and now there was light from the moon. Her wind began to fail; and the longer he ran, the fresher seemed Hawke. He gained slowly on Cécile, once more he put out his hand, and grabbed at her hair. She uttered a cry of despair.

They were then running close by a hedge-row of tamarisk. The next moment Mr. Hawke was lying flat on the ground, stunned by a blow on the head from a heavy stick.

It was Jack Heathcote's stick. He had been waiting by the hedge, looking at the house. All the inns of Avignon he had searched for Cécile in vain; then had concluded that she was at the château with Edith. He had come out late to see her, had found the house closed, and had loitered a little by the hedge.

Cécile lay, gasping, on his breast.

But she held in her hand the confession of Lemaitre.

It was useless, however, as far as he was concerned. They found him in the morning near the spot where he had written it, lying on the floor, with horribly black and twisted face, dead. His heart had burst.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Battle.

Away in the desert, about this very time, a great battle was fought.

It was the 28th of August, in the afternoon. Some officers stood chatting together before a tent-door. Their skins were tanned; they had just returned from a hot day's riding under the grilling Egyptian sun.

"What is the meaning of the enemy's tactics?" asked Pendragon. "They are massed in overwhelming numbers, yet they do not move at all."

"I have a fancy that something should happen before long. Graham will soon madden them to action," answered Arthur, mopping his wet brow. "Wolseley is hardly the man to lose time when he feels that he can strike; and the troops are getting well up to the front now."

"Lord!" cried Jack Lascelles—"will that tea never be ready? My throat feels like the dustbin of Africa."

The troopers were busy unsaddling horses, and providing them with forage, while the regimental messmen were hard at work preparing refreshment for the soldiers. They had just come back to camp from a long ride over the glaring, burning desert.

The camp was pitched just south of Mahsameh, and consisted only of cavalry. The infantry division, under General Graham, was at the moment engaged in holding the enemy in check at the Kassassin Lock, on the Sweet-water Canal. Musgrave's regiment had only that morning arrived at Mahsameh from Tel-el-Mahuta; but he, Pendragon, and Lascelles had been selected for service on the staff, and were thus, for the time being, serving with the main body of cavalry, consisting of the Household Cavalry, the 7th Dragoon Guards, and a battery of the Royal Horse Artillery. These formed, for the present, the entire cavalry brigade under General Drury Lowe.

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They had advanced upon the enemy that morning, only to be ordered back again, when the Egyptian attack, with a much superior force, had necessitated a retirement from the rather exposed position held by the cavalry troops.

The heat had been almost insupportable during the hours of enforced inaction. The sun glistened down upon the arid, leafless waste of desert sand. Storms of sand and dust raised by the hot sirocco swept the desert like breaths from an open furnace.

The Egyptian tactics throughout the early hours were inexplicable: though massed in large numbers, and well supported by cavalry and artillery, they had delivered no real assault. General Graham had concluded that the cavalry brigade might be relieved from further toil that day. Canvas afforded the only possible shelter, and the cavalry towards afternoon accordingly fell back upon Mahsameh and camp.

"Yon's t' officers' mess," said Tom Wilson, standing near, with three horses' reins thrown over his arm. "A'd have some tea now, sir; A doan't think thoo'll have much time to drink it in."

"No, Tom?—and why not?" asked Arthur.

"I hear something. Hark!"

"Do you hear anything, Lascelles?"

"No, I don't think so."

"I do," said Tom.

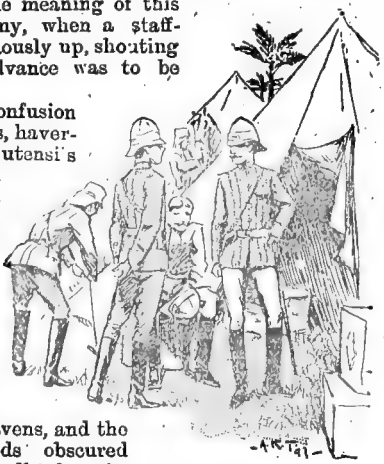
"Do you, Pendragon?"

"No—yes, I do! A faint booming."

Presently all heard it; it had deepened into a dull roar of heavy guns in the direction of Kassassin.

A determined attack was being delivered on Graham's small force, which was composed of the 46th, the 84th, some companies of marines, and a troop of mounted infantry—about 1,800 all told.

The officers returned to the mess, and were washing the dust from their throats with copious draughts of tea, discussing the probable meaning of this move by the enemy, when a staff-officer galloped furiously up, shouting that a general advance was to be made at once.



Before a tent door.

A scene of wild confusion followed. Mess-tins, haversacks, and cooking utensils were flung and bundled about in all directions, before the troopers flew to saddle their already tired horses; but in ten minutes the brigade had formed, and was proceeding to the front at a smart trot.

The blazing sun still rode in the heavens, and the hurrying sand-clouds obscured everything, though rolls of smoke and deep red jets of flame were visible through the sandy murkiness of the air, while the ear could detect the deep roar of the conflict now proceeding. After a weary ride, the cavalry took up a position on the right of the fighting line. The sun set beyond the sand hills, leaving a deep crimson glare; but the dust, which rolled in one enveloping coverlet over the scene of action, rendered any idea of what was going on impossible.

The Duke of Cornwall's Regiment and the Marine Artillery were bearing the brunt of the attack, the former regiment having thrown forward a fighting line of skirmishers in extended order. Later on the York and Lancaster, which had been held in reserve, deployed to take their share in the defence of the position. The enemy kept up a continual murderous cannonade, firing salvoes of four guns with shell and shrapnel.

General Graham sent word to General Drury Lowe that "he could do no more than hold his position and attack the enemy's skirmishers."

A shot entered the breast of Arthur.

The cavalry commander at once made his decision. Though his brigade consisted of wearied men and horses, he knew that he could depend upon them. But his plan was desperate. It was nothing less than to make a sudden dash upon the enemy's rear, against unknown odds, in the deepening darkness.

Sir Baker Russell, acting as Brigade-Major, gave the word, and the body of cavalry moved off quietly to the right, unseen by the enemy. They were soon hidden by the sand-hills, and urged their horses at a quicker pace.

Once, as Arthur turned his head, to his surprise he noticed somewhat behind him, Tom Wilson. The last light was just then fading. He called Tom to him.

"What is the meaning of this, Tom? Why are you not in camp with your regiment?"

"A'm going into action, sir."

"But that is not an answer to my question. You must not do mad things of that sort. Return at once!"

Pendragon came riding towards Arthur just then, and Tom fell back among the mass of horses nimbly treading over the dry and yielding sand. But Tom did not fall far back. He had the behests of a higher power than Arthur to obey—the behests of Cécile Delisle.

It was quite dark when the cavalry brigade dashed in one wide storm upon the enemy's rear; but the scene was soon lit up by a vast red vault of glare, like the dawning of day in Hades. A scene of frightful carnage followed.

Captain Musgrave, with his helmet shot away, with torn clothes, with snow-white hair, with sword hewing its advancing way into the thick of peril, would have seemed to anyone to be courting death. But he was simply careless of life. His whole soul was intent upon one thing only—the slaughter of as many Egyptians as two arms could kill.

He was on foot. His horse was dead. Behind him, also on foot, was Tom Wilson. For every forward step that Arthur took, Tom took one.

At last it was clear that the enemy were in flight. The indefinable instinct of victory began to be felt by the British troops. The throng of battle grew less dense.

Arthur, rushing across a small open space upon a scimitar-brandishing Bedouin, slipped in a pool of gluey blood and fell. The Egyptian made a slash at him which must inevitably have ended him. But Tom Wilson had thrown himself above him. The blade passed slanting through Tom's right shoulder and cut his lung in two. He dropped at once, and in a moment Arthur was bending over him.

"I told you, Tom—ah, my boy, you have died for me!"

Tom opened his mouth to speak, but could not. Arthur bent low down, listening. Tom tried again, and this time a rasping sound escaped his lips.

"Tell Cécile——" he said.

He stiffened and was dead.

At the same moment a shot entered the breast of Arthur and he fell upon the lifeless body of Tom Wilson.

(The end of this story will appear next week.)

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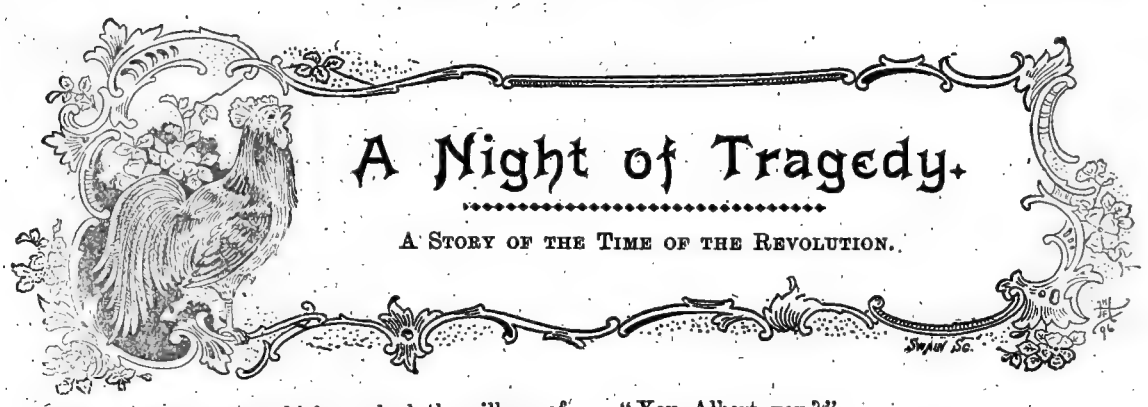

A Night of Tragedy.

A Story of the Time of the Revolution.

On the wooded heights which overlook the village of Hericourt-en-Caux, at the close of a September afternoon in 1800, a lady of youthful appearance was sitting on a stone bench beside the door of an old castle.

All was silence around her.

The only noise which broke the stillness of the evening was the murmuring of a little brook which flowed at the bottom of the valley. Twilight veiled earth and sky in haze, and slowly the night came.

The woman was seated with her hands folded over her knees, in an attitude of deep reverie. Of what did she dream? When it is known that she was twenty-eight years old, and consequently must have passed through many joys and sorrows, we may well believe that her dream was of past memories, and if we remember that the French Revolution ended in suffering, we can understand why the captivating beauty of her face was made gloomy in this time of sadness.

Suddenly she was aroused from her meditations. She heard a footstep on the gravel, and pulling herself together, not wishing to be seen so sad and dejected, in a voice bearing no trace of sorrow, she cried:

"Is that you, Clement?"

And as no one answered, she got up, went to the side whence proceeded the voice, and looked out. Alone on the deserted road, a man advanced towards her.

For a moment she stared at him.

He was tall, broad-shouldered, alert, and vigorous, clad in a brown open coat with a blue waistcoat, and wearing boots of Russian leather. His hat was of black felt. There was nothing that would attract attention in his appearance but his face, the proud and noble expression of which showed that he was of good birth, and made a striking contrast to the disorder of his soiled clothes, the want disclosed by the worn-down-at-heel appearance of his mud-bespattered boots. While his bearing and features were those of a gentleman, his attitude, on the contrary, resembled that of one of those vagabonds who, for some years past, had over-run all the roads stopped the vehicles, and molested the travellers, and who were a witness of the weakness of the police and their inability to establish security in France.

Surprised by the appearance of this unknown, the young lady asked:

"What do you want, sir? Who are you?"

But instead of answering her question, he asked another in a supplicating tone:

"Am I so changed in eight years, dear Clary, that you don't know me?"

The girl bent forward to see him better, and, agitated and trembling, she cried:

"You, Albert, you?"

"Yes, I, Albert de Saint-Frémont."

"But what are you doing here, you poor thing?"

"Seeking refuge for a few hours. I am an outlaw, a fugitive. Suspected of having taken part in a conspiracy, followed, surrounded by police-spies, I left Paris two days ago hoping to reach St. Valery and find there means of crossing to England. But the journey has been hard. I have travelled without rest and have scarcely eaten. I am worn out; I can't go any further. I remembered that this castle was on my road, where formerly I was received as a friend, a *fiance*, that the beautiful young girl who lived there with her parents had promised to wait for me, and I came, not to remind her of her promise, from which time, a long absence, and my misfortunes have released her, but to beg for a temporary shelter. If you don't consent to receive me, Clary, I am lost."

She clasped her hands with a gesture of despair. She was moved with pity, and in a broken voice she murmured:

"To receive you is, alas! impossible. I am not alone here. My husband lives with me. He has been absent for some days, but is returning this evening, and if he finds you in his house he will betray you. He is a follower of Bonaparte."

Albert drew himself up:

"Your husband! You have married in spite of your engagement?"

There was reproach in his cry.

"Do not hate or blame me," continued Clary. "If I have sacrificed you, if I have feigned to have forgotten you, it was because I was compelled to. Yes, compelled, six years ago. My father, accused of treason, was arrested, tried by a Revolutionary Tribunal, and condemned to death. Resolved to save him or perish with him, I decided to go to Paris and beg for mercy. I knew none of the powerful men of the day, but some one recommended me to go to a member of the National Convention,—Clement Javarin."

"Clement Javarin. A terrorist, a regicide!" exclaimed Albert. "You dared to go to that scoundrel!"

"I had no choice. And then, he was our fellow-country man, the deputy from our department; we had known him in happier times. For these reasons I threw myself on his mercy. At first he repulsed me sternly: then he yielded and consented to speak for us to Robespierre. I thought he would carry out his promise. Alas, I was greatly mistaken. On my second visit he declared he would only give us his protection on condition that I consented to marry him. 'You are beautiful,' he said to me, 'you are rich, and I like you. Be my wife and

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your father will be saved.' I protested, I stormed, I entreated, all in vain; he was inexorable. My father was released, and I became the wife of Clement Javarin."

"And your father accepted this sacrifice?"

"He didn't know until it was too late to prevent it. He didn't survive it. Some months after his release he died of grief, declaring that to save him I had vowed myself to perpetual unhappiness."

"You do not love your husband?" demanded Albert, who, his anger explained away, was the picture of grief and sympathy for his friend.

"Love him!" exclaimed Clary. "How can I love him when I am his victim? No, I don't love him; I hate him. But he loves me." And after a pause she added: "You understand, Albert, I couldn't protect you here. Oh, dear—oh, dear, what can I do?"

"Don't be unhappy," he said. "If my presence frightens you so I will go. Though painful, I must bestir myself. I can't see you worried, Clary," he cried suddenly.

He staggered and would have fallen if he had not leant against the wall. As for Clary, perplexed, bewildered, and undecided, she gazed at this spirit whose sudden return filled her heart with trouble and anguish.

"He loves me."

"Did you meet anyone on your way to the castle?" she asked at length.

"No one, and I don't think anyone saw me."

"Then come. I can only save you by one way. We will try it. May Heaven protect us."

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"Hide you until to-morrow," she replied. "Come."

She offered him her arm, and putting his trembling hand upon it he let her lead him through the gloom.

They passed together the threshold of the castle and entered the vast hall at the end of which they could see, through a half-opened door, a room lighted by two lamps, where the servants were spreading a meal. By the light which came from this apartment Albert perceived, at the end of the hall, the beginning of a large staircase. A word from Clary made him understand that he had to reach this staircase without being heard or seen by the servants in the dining-room. Following the example of his conductress, he held his breath and walked on tip-toe.

"The most difficult part is accomplished," she said in a low voice, when they had arrived safely at the foot of the stairs. Then they cautiously mounted and in a moment were at the first landing. Clary hastened along, with Albert following in her footsteps. They crossed the landing, and opening a door which faced them, Clary ushered Saint-Frémont in.

"Wait patiently till I return," she whispered. "You are safe here."

Without giving him time to answer she shut the door behind her. He heard the key being turned in the lock. He was alone and imprisoned. At first he could see nothing, but gradually his eyes became accustomed to the darkness. He was in a luxurious room. In an alcove, under light curtains, he saw a big white bed; nearer to him a toilet-table, a mirror, a bureau, an embroidery-frame, a book-case, and a harp, and in the vases on the mantel-piece flowers and grasses. Seeing these knick-knacks, this comfort, and all the luxuries of life, arranged with touches of coquetry and grace by a woman's hand, he realised that, not knowing where to hide him, Clary had not hesitated to put her own room at his disposal.

At the thought that he was in her home, surrounded by the familiar tokens of her daily life, a great tenderness came over him, and the love which all these years had not been destroyed, but increased, awoke within him, as powerful, as strong and true as in the far gone time when it was his right.

Suddenly the key was turned in the lock, the door opened and was shut again, and Clary stood before him. She carried in a napkin some food, a bottle of wine, bread and fruit.

"It is all I could get

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Patting his arm round her, he kissed her.

without being seen," she said, arranging them on the table.

"Where are we?" he ventured to ask.

"In my room," she answered. "If Javarin finds us here he will kill us both, but he won't know you are in the house: he never comes in here. You will hide yourself, so that if by chance he did come in he wouldn't see you."

While she spoke she struck a match and lighted a candle.

By this pale light they looked at each other, and started, surprised at the embarrassment shown on each face.

Clary was the first to recover herself.

"I brought you here," she said, "because it is the only room in the castle in which it is in my power to give you a safe refuge. Anywhere else would have been risky. I give it you for some hours. No one will think of looking for you here."

"But you, Clary, where will you pass the night?"

"In a neighbouring room, where I will keep watch until the morning. Before the sun rises I will help you make your escape. You will have rested, and in a short time you will be at Saint-Valery."

"It was ordained then that I was to owe my life to you," he murmured. "Ah, Clary, how can I show you my gratitude?"

"How? By remembering me."

"To what end?" he groaned.

"Why despair?" she replied. "Who knows that the future will not make amends to us for the hardships we have suffered in the past and in the present?"

"You still love me, then?"

"I love you, and will love you as long as you love me."

"Ah, Clary, Clary!"

He stood up, holding out his arms, his eyes sparkling with the joy her words had evoked. But a noise which they heard from without rooted him to the spot. It was the sound of carriage wheels, of horses' hoofs, and the jingling of bells.

"It is Javarin," exclaimed Clary. She put her finger on her lips to imply the need for prudence, and going out, she shut and locked the door behind her as she had done before.

* * * * *

An hour later, in the spacious dining-room, the old member of the Convention and his young wife had finished their meal. Javarin had come straight to the table from his carriage without waiting to change his dusty travelling attire. He had travelled post-haste from Paris, stopping only to change horses, and after a hasty meal he promised himself a good night's rest after his weary journey.

The disorder of his dress, his ruffled hair, and his untidy appearance betrayed the vulgarity of the man. On his coarse features the signs of his brutal nature were even more visible than usual. His low forehead, his fat,

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heavy chin, his big round eyes, all revealed the disposition of a despot, the grossness of his tastes and his depraved instincts.

To see him beside Clary, so delicate and so gracious, made one wonder how such a charming woman could have been persuaded to marry one so unsuited to her.

For six years, however, she had lived with him, without complaint, hiding under her reserve the repulsion she felt to the man. Yes, she hated him, and only hid her feelings that by so doing she might, one day, have the chance of wreaking her vengence upon him.

The disparity of age between them only aggravated the dissimilarity of their tastes. At forty, Clement Javarin seemed to have buried all his better feelings and only lived to accumulate money.

"What does this mean?"

Already very rich, having added to the fortune which came to him through his wife, he dreamed of more, and welcomed the rise of Bonaparte, his idol, by whose elevation he saw a means of gain to himself.

But Clary took no part in his dreams or ambitions; she lived, retired, in the castle where she was born, and dreamt other dreams, had other ambitions, and treasured another ideal. She dreamt of liberty and love.

It was into this state of affairs that Saint-Frémont had stepped. At sight of him Clary had realised that he loved her still, and she put forth all her strength to save him.

During dinner Clary had been tormented by agonising thoughts of her loved one hidden away, of catastrophes which might befall and troubles which might come, but outwardly she remained calm and sedate, hiding her anxiety bravely.

To disarm suspicion she had simulated an interest in the return and the doings of her husband, and the events in Paris. Surprised by her unusual behaviour, Javarin talked of the attempt on the life of Bonaparte, the explosion of the "infernal machine" on his route, and the means the police were taking to find those accused of being implicated in the plot.

"They are pursuing them, they are hemming them in on all sides," Javarin said. "Already many of them have been arrested, soon all will be, and then they will be punished as they deserve."

"But do they know who they all are?" asked Clary.

"Those they have arrested have given the names of the others."

Afraid of betraying herself if the name of Albert de Saint-Frémont were mentioned before her, Clary asked no more questions, but showed an indignation equal to his own against the authors of this outrage. In spite of her marriage she had remained a Royalist, so Javarin was rejoiced to hear her utter such sentiments, and speak of Bonaparte as she did.

"I am glad to hear you do justice to the saviour of our country," he said. "If all the French were as open-minded as you, Clary, the dangers which threaten us would exist only in imagination."

"I am convinced of it," she answered, wishing to please him.

"Then suit your actions to your words."

"How?"

As she asked the question she left the

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table, he rose also, and coming towards her, took her hand, and putting his arm round her, he kissed her.

Feeling contact with him odious, Clary attempted to disengage herself, longing to tell him how she hated him and looked on him with loathing and disgust. But she suddenly remembered the refugee hidden in her room, and to save him, she not only remained passive in her husband's embrace, but returned his caress. Then to cut short this scene which humiliated her so, she repeated her question.

"You ask me to make my actions agree with my words, what do you mean?"

"That since you admire Bonaparte, you should go to pay your respects to him."

"I!" she exclaimed. "You would like me to go to Paris?"

"You won't be the first or the last to give homage to the Premier Consul. In offering yours, you will strengthen my influence over him. You will never regret it. Bonaparte is the man of the future; France is already at his feet. Promise to come with me the next time I go to Paris."

"If you think my presence is necessary to your interests I will go," she answered.

"Oh, that is good," he said joyously. "Believe me, Clary, I am deeply grateful. If there is any way in which I can show you how I feel about it, tell me; I shall be delighted to obey you."

Then feigning to be greatly impressed by his offer, she said:

"Grant me this boon at some future time. I cannot use it at present, but when the necessity arises I will claim it."

At that moment a servant entered, and Javerin asked:

"What is it? Who wants me?"

"The Mayor of Hericourt desires to speak to you outside, sir," answered the servant.

"The Mayor of Hericourt. Show him in."

The Mayor entered, accompanied by an individual in black, whom Clary didn't know, and two gendarmes.

"What does this mean?" demanded Javarin in an imperious way, "these gendarmes in my house!"

"Pardon me, M. Javarin," replied the Mayor, quite overwhelmed by the bold step his duty compelled him to take, "Monsieur will explain to you," pointing to the man in black, "he is from Paris and has his orders."

More and more surprised and excited, Javarin turned to the stranger.

"Speak, sir," he said to him, "for in truth I do not understand."

"You will understand, monsieur, I am commissioned by the head of police to look for the men who wished to assassinate the Premier Consul, and I have reason to believe that one of them has taken refuge here."

"Here!" cried Javarin in a tone which showed an incredulity equalled only by his evident amazement. "What folly! If he had come into my house I should know of it. My people would have told me, I can trust them."

Clary stepped forward and said resolutely:

"And I would have seen him myself. I sat in front of the castle all the afternoon, waiting for M. Javarin, who was to return from Paris. I only left at his arrival. No one could have entered without passing me."

"You hear, sir," exclaimed Javarin. "Do you imagine anyone would beg for shelter at the house of such a notorious upholder of the Premier Consul as I am? To come to the house of Javarin would be to give oneself up."

"These brigands are bold enough for anything. Just because your house would be such an unlikely place to be searched, they would think it a safe refuge."

The force of this argument struck Javarin:

"Yes, perhaps you are right," he said.

The police officer continued:

"He left Paris two days ago for Saint-Valery-en-Caux where he meant to embark. Hearing of his intentions from one of his accomplices, I was on my way to intercept him there when, in passing through this village, I heard of a stranger having been seen. On inquiry I recognised my man. When last seen he was at the entrance of your park. I desired Monsieur the Mayor to put these gendarmes at my service, and came here, knowing that you would second me in my efforts to capture this criminal."

Javarin bowed, and in a condescending voice replied:

"You have every reason to count on my zeal. General Bonaparte hasn't a more faithful servant than I. Everyone here is under your orders. What do you think of doing?"

"First of all I will search the park, and if he isn't found there, I'm afraid we must look through the castle."

"I will guide you myself, sir," replied Javarin. And turning towards the servants assembled round the door he gave his orders:

"Light the lanterns, let the dogs loose, and conduct Monsieur to the boundaries of the park, and show him all over."

All this time Clary was enduring the utmost torture. Hope of saving the man she loved was disappearing. She knew that after the search in the park, every room in the castle would be peered into, and how could she protect him from these people? No solution of the problem occurred to her. She saw, in imagination, Albert arrested before her eyes, imprisoned, tried, and shot.

"What can I do, what can I do?"

All at once she realised that she was alone with her husband. The police officer, accompanied by the Mayor and the gendarmes, had gone out. One could hear them calling to each other in the park, and the barking of dogs. Clary saw the peril that Saint-Frémont was in. She threw a despairing look towards Heaven, as if taking it as a witness of the dire necessity which drove her to this last step, and going up to Javerin, she said:

"Listen to me. A few minutes ago, after I had promised to go with you to Paris you offered to prove your gratitude when the occasion arose. Prove it now, on this occasion, at once."

"This occasion!" he exclaimed in surprise. "Where? How?"

Then taking another step towards him she replied in a low voice:

"The man who you are looking for is here."

"Here! In my house?" he cried. "But who let him in without consulting me? Who gave him permission to enter?"

Not answering this double question, but clasping her hands, she repeated:

"He is here, and I beseech you to help me to save him."

* * * * *

Standing before her husband in an attitude of entreaty, Clary waited anxiously for him to speak. But he kept silence. It was terrible, more awful than a burst of fury.

"Why do you not speak, Clement?" asked Clary in

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A shot was fired and Javarin fell to the floor.

a voice broken by emotion. "Will you not grant my request?"

He gave no answer, but tried to make her utter the words which would betray her.

"So," he said, "you have sheltered this man, and you do not fear the risk to me of being taken for your accomplice? You cannot be ignorant of the law of the Premier Consul, that all who conceal conspirators shall suffer the same penalty as they do. You did not hesitate, you received him and hid him: and you only confess your imprudence to me when you know that he will be found. Why are you so interested in him? Do you know him? What is his name? Explain yourself, I'm waiting."

"He is the Chevalier de Saint-Frémont."

"Saint-Frémont? You have given refuge to him? Miserable woman, do you not know that he is the tool of Georges Cry-doudel? And you ask me to aid you in saving him—him, the most violent, the most dangerous of the enemies of the Premier Consul. You thought that I would grant your request?"

"I think so still," replied Clary. "I will tell you my reason, and then perhaps you will understand me. Once, before I knew you or thought that I would ever be your wife, I was engaged to M. de Saint-Frémont. We were to have been married, when he emigrated, and I have not seen him since. But the memories that he awakened in me when he came to seek shelter under our roof prevented my sending him away. I hoped he would continue his flight to-night after a rest, but he is still here."

The frankness of this confession seemed to impress Javarin.

"Why didn't you tell me this six years ago when we married?" he asked.

"Because I did not wish to humiliate you further, when you refused to defend my father unless I married you, by telling you that I could never love you as I loved another, and that I was absolutely sacrificing myself."

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"But, perhaps, as you love this man, he loves you, too."

"I believe he loves me," replied Clary simply. "As for me, what do my sentiments matter to you? Ah, Clement, if you want me to forget him, save him. Save him. I beg of you, and I will forget him, so that all my life I will remember your generosity and be grateful with all my heart"

She had never looked so beautiful, and Javarin was touched.

He came across to her and said very gently:

"With all your heart, is that true?"

She looked him straight in the face:

"I have never told a lie," she affirmed. "Save Albert, and I will have no other wish but to please you."

He strained her to his heart.

"Ah siren, what do you wish me to do?"

"You consent?" she cried.

"I must, when your tenderness, which has been withheld for so long, is the prize."

She was rejoiced, and for a moment he felt her kisses freely given. Unhappily for her, in her frenzy, she had ceased to observe him. She did not see what his eyes betrayed.

"Where have you hidden him?" he asked.

"In my room."

"Bring him here."

"Here!" she exclaimed stupified. "But they will see him."

"No, they won't, they are far away in the park. We have plenty of time to send him safely away. Only, be quick. Give him one of my cloaks, and money if he needs it. Go, quickly."

She obeyed him, and disappeared. Then Javarin ran to the door which opened on to the park. A gendarme was acting as sentinel.

"Run and tell the officer that I want him here at once. I think we have what he is looking for."

He turned to the room, his eyes shining with joy.

"We are here," the voice of Clary said suddenly. She was there, and beside her Albert de Saint-Frémont.

"Come, sir," said Javarin. "I am going to take you to the park gates and show you your road, while my wife detains the people who are looking for you."

He dragged him, amidst many expressions of gratitude, to the door. They had only gone a few steps, however, when the officer, followed by his men, came hurrying up, and at the call of Javarin ran towards them.

"Too late" murmured the latter to Saint-Frémont, pushing him back into the room they had just left.

Clary, overcome by surprise and trouble, screamed. Convinced that ill-luck only had stopped her husband from carrying out his good intentions, she came towards him. But waving her aside he turned to the police officer and pointing to Saint-Frémont, said:

"There is the man for whom you are looking."

Then she understood.

"Wretch! Wretch!" She threw these words at him in a voice stifled by sobs. But he remained unmoved, only saying in a low voice to her:

"By confessing that you loved him you condemned him."

Meanwhile the gendarmes tried to seize Saint-Frémont. He, however, set them at defiance, placing his back against the wall and covering them with his revolver. But one of them struck his arm so heavily that it fell to his side, useless, and he stood before them defenceless.

"I hope, sir," Javarin then said to the officer, "that you will inform the Premier Consul of my zeal in his service."

"Justice will be done to you," replied the man.

"Tell him," Jarvin added, "that it was owing to me that you caught your man, and owing to madame."

A cry of horror from Clary greeted this awful accusation. Drawing herself up she denied the charge, but Jaravin repeated:

"It was she who delivered him to you. She wished to prove her devotion to Bonaparte."

At these words, which Saint-Frémont heard as he was being taken from the room, he turned. His angry eyes fell on Clary, who read the reproach in them. Suspected by him! That was more than she could bear. Javarin's words had aroused his suspicions, destroyed his faith in her.

He signed to the gendarmes to continue their way. She intercepted them. She would not let her lover go before she had justified herself. She entreated him not to believe Javarin, but she saw by his coldness that he thought her guilty.

Suddenly she ceased her protestations, they were all in vain. Mad with despair her eye caught the gleam of the revolver which had been forced out of Saint-Frémont's hand. She picked it up and, overcome by a desire for vengeance on Jaravin, she approached him.

"I will prove that I am not your accomplice," she said.

A shot was fired and Javarin fell to the floor.

* * * * *

Some days after the Chevalier de Saint-Frémont was brought before a court-martial and condemned to death, and was executed at Paris, on the plain of Grenelle.

As for Clary Javarin, at first arrested for the murder of her husband, she was soon liberated. Bonaparte, after due consideration, had decided that she should not be prosecuted.

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Busaco is, perhaps, the most picturesque of Peninsula battles. In the wild nature of the ground over which it raged, the dramatic incidents which marked its progress, the furious daring of the assault, and the stern valour of the defence, it is almost without a rival.

The French had every advantage in the fight—save one. They were 65,000 strong, an army of veterans, many of them the men of Austerlitz and Marengo. Massena led; Ney was second in command: both facts being pledges of daring generalship. The English were falling sullenly back in the long retreat which ended at Torres Vedras, and the French were in exultant pursuit. Massena added that he was going to "drive the leopard into the sea," and French soldiers, it may be added, are never so dangerous as when on fire with the *élan* of success.

Wellington's army was inferior to its foe in numbers, and of mixed nationality, and it is probable that retreat had loosened the fibre of even British discipline, if not of British courage. Two days before Busaco, for example, the Light Division—the very flower of the British army—was encamped in a pine-wood which a peasant had warned them was "haunted."

During the night, without signal or visible cause, officers and men, as though suddenly smitten with frenzy, started from their sleep and dispersed in all directions. Nor could the mysterious panic be stayed until some officer, shrewder than the rest, shouted the order: "Prepare to receive cavalry," when the instinct of discipline asserted itself, the men rushed into rallying squares, and recovered from their panic.

But battle is to the British soldier a tonic, and when Wellington drew up his lines, in challenge of battle to his pursuer, on the great hill of Busaco, his red-coated soldiery were at least full of a grim satisfaction. One of the combatants has described the diverse aspects of the two hosts on the night before the fight:

"The French were all bustle and gaiety; but along the whole English line, the soldiers, in stern silence, examined their flints, cleaned their locks and barrels, and then stretched themselves on the ground to rest, each one with his firelock within his grasp."

The single advantage of the British lay in their position. Busaco is a great hill, one of the loftiest and most rugged in Portugal, eight miles in breadth, and barring the road by which Massena was moving on hither.

"There are certainly," said Wellington, "many bad roads in Portugal, but the enemy has taken decidedly the worst in the whole Kingdom."

The great ridge, with its gloomy, tree-clad heights, and cloven crest, round which the mists hung in sullen vapour, was an ideal position for defence. In its front was a valley forming a natural ditch so deep that the eye could scarcely pierce its depths. The ravine at one point was so narrow that the English and French guns waged duel across it, but on the British side the chasm was almost perpendicular.

From their aëry perch on September 28th, 1810, the English watched Massena's great host coming on. Every eminence sparkled with their bayonets, every road was crowded with their waggons; it seemed not so much the march of an army as the movement of a nation.

The vision of "grim Busaco's iron ridge," glittering with British bayonets, arrested the march of the French; but Ney, whose military glance was keen and sure, saw that the English arrangements were not yet complete: an unfilled gap, three miles wide, parted the right wing from the left, and he was eager for an immediate attack. Massena, however, was ten miles in the rear. According to Marbot, who has left a spirited account of Busaco, Massena put off the attack till the next day, and thus threw away a great opportunity.

In the gloomy depths of the ravines, however, a war of skirmishers broke out, and the muskets rang loudly through the echoing valleys, while the puffs of eddying white smoke rose through the black pines. But night fell, and the mountain heights above were crowned with the bivouac fires of a hundred thousand warriors, over whom the serene sky glittered. Presently a bitter wind broke on the mountain summits, and all through the night the soldiers shivered under its keen blast.

Massena's plan of attack was simple and daring. Ney was to climb the steep front on the English left, and assail the Light Division under Crauford; Regnier, with a *corps d'élite*, was to attack the English left, held by Picton's division. Regnier formed his attack into five columns while the stars were yet glittering coldly in the morning sky. They had first to plunge into the savage depths of the ravine, and then climb the steep slope leading to the British position.

The vigour of the attack was magnificent. General Marle, who had won fame at Austerlitz, personally led the charge. At a run the columns went down the ravine; at a run, scarcely less swift, they swept up the hostile slope. The guns smote the columns from end to end, and the attack left behind it a broad crimson trail of the dead and dying. But it never paused.

A wave of steel and fire and martial tumult, it swept

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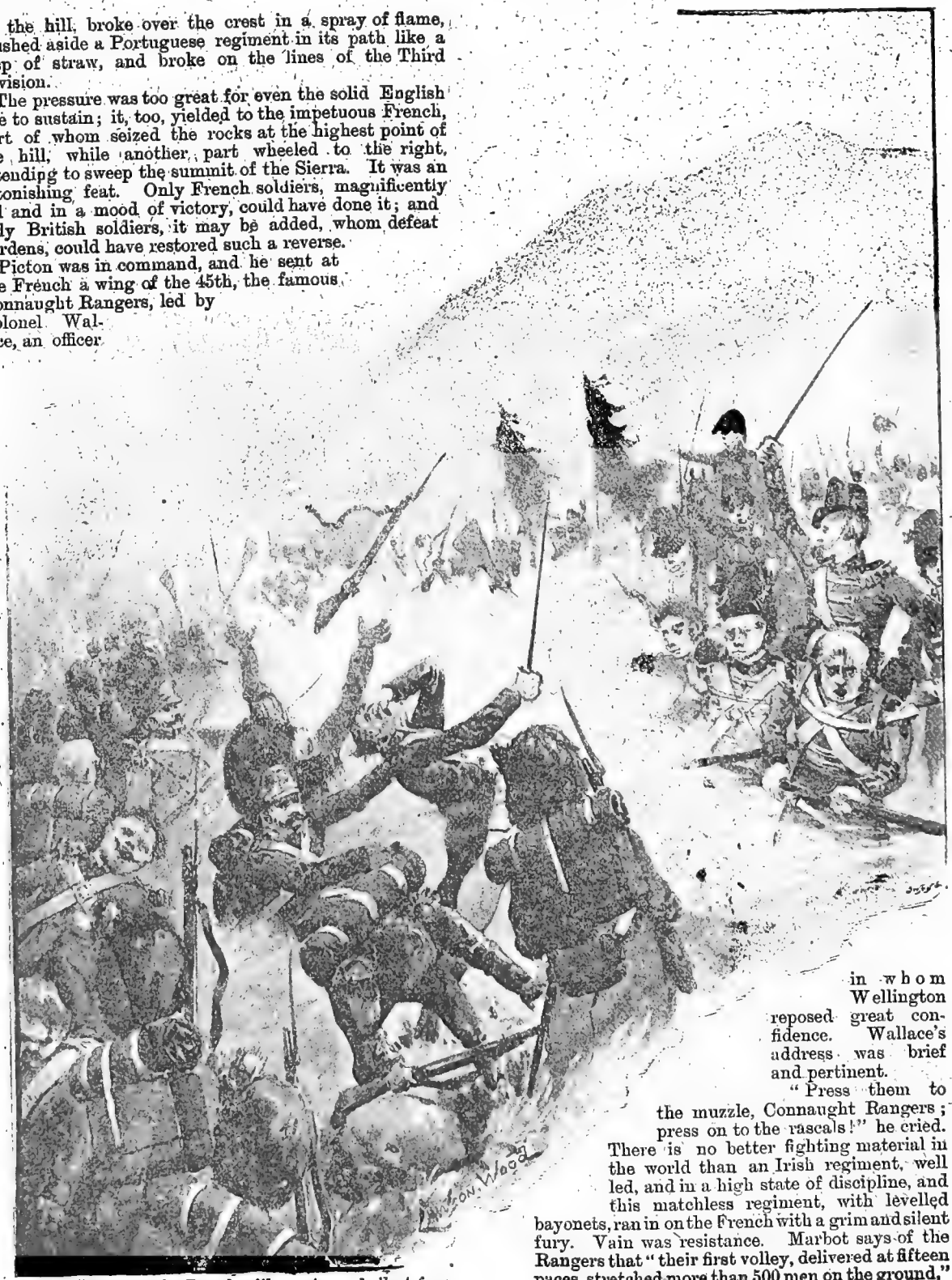
up the hill, broke over the crest in a spray of flame, brushed aside a Portuguese regiment in its path like a wisp of straw, and broke on the lines of the Third Division.

The pressure was too great for even the solid English line to sustain; it, too, yielded to the impetuous French, part of whom seized the rocks at the highest point of the hill, while another part wheeled to the right, intending to sweep the summit of the Sierra. It was an astonishing feat. Only French soldiers, magnificently led and in a mood of victory, could have done it; and only British soldiers, it may be added, whom defeat hardens, could have restored such a reverse.

Picton was in command, and he sent at the French a wing of the 45th, the famous Connaught Rangers, led by Colonel Wallace, an officer in whom Wellington reposed great confidence. Wallace's address was brief and pertinent.

"Press them to the muzzle, Connaught Rangers; press on to the rascals!" he cried. There is no better fighting material in the world than an Irish regiment, well led, and in a high state of discipline, and this matchless regiment, with levelled bayonets, ran in on the French with a grim and silent fury. Vain was resistance. Marbot says of the Rangers that "their first volley, delivered at fifteen paces, stretched more than 500 men on the ground,"



Ran in on the French with a grim and silent fury.

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and the threatening gleam of the bayonet followed fiercely on the flame of the musket.

The French were borne, shouting, struggling, and fighting desperately, over the crest and down the steep slope to the ravine below. In a whirlwind of dust and fire and clamour went the whole body of furious soldiery into the valley, leaving a broad tract of broken arms and dying men.

According to the regimental records of the 88th, "twenty minutes sufficed to teach the heroes of Marengo and Austerlitz that they must yield to the Rangers of Connaught!" As the breathless Rangers re-formed triumphantly on the ridge, Wellington galloped up and declared he had never witnessed a more gallant charge.

But a wing of Regnier's attack had formed at right angles across the ridge. It was pressing forward with stern resolution; it swept before it the light companies of the 74th and 88th Regiments, and unless this attack could be arrested the position and the battle were lost.

Picton rallied his lines within *sixty yards* of the French muskets, a feat not the least marvellous in a marvellous fight, and then sent them furiously at the exulting French, who held a strong position amongst the rocks

It is always difficult to disentangle the confusion which marks a great fight. Napier says that it was Cameron who formed line with the 38th under a violent fire, and, without returning shot, ran in upon the French grenadiers with the bayonets and hurled them triumphantly over the crest

Picton, on the other hand, declares that it was the light companies of the 74th and the 88th under Major Smith, an officer of great daring—who fell in the moment of victory—that flung the last down over the cliff. Who can decide when such experts—and actors in the actual scene—differ?

The result, however, as seen from the French side, is clear. "The French," Marbot records, "found themselves driven in a heap down the deep descent, up which they had climbed, and the English lines followed them half way down, firing murderous volleys.

"At this point we lost a general, two colonels, 80 officers, and 700 or 800 men.

"The English," he adds, in explanation of this dreadful loss of life, "were the best marksmen in Europe, the only troops who were perfectly practised in the use of small arms, whence their firing was far more accurate than that of any other infantry."

A gleam of humour at this point crosses the grim visage of battle. Picton, on lying down in his bivouac the night before the battle, had adorned his head with a picturesque and highly-coloured nightcap. The sudden attack of the French woke him, he clapped on cloak and cocked hat, and rode to the fighting line, when he personally led the attack which flung the last of Regnier's troops down the slope.

At the moment of the charge he took off his cocked hat to wave the troops onward; this revealed the domestic head-dress he unconsciously wore, and the astonished soldiers beheld their general enflamed with war-like fury gesticulating martially in a night cap! A great shout of laughter went up from the men, as they stopped for a moment to realise the spectacle; then with a tempest of mingled laughter and cheers, they flung themselves on the enemy.

Meanwhile Ney had formed his attack on the English left, held by Crauford and the famous Light Division. Marbot praises the characteristic tactics of the British in such fights.

"After having, as we do," he says, "garnished their front with skirmishers, they post their principal forces out of sight, holding them all the time sufficiently near to the key of the position to be able to attack the enemy the instant they reach it; and this attack, made unexpectedly on assailants who had lost heavily, and think the victory already theirs, succeeds almost invariably. We had," he adds, "a melancholy experience of this art at Busaco."

Crauford, a soldier of fine skill, made exactly such a disposition of his men. Some rocks at the edge of the ravine formed natural embrasures for the English guns under Ross; below them the Rifles were flung out as skirmishers; behind them the German Infantry were the only visible troops. But in a fold of the hill, unseen, Crauford held the 43rd and 52nd Regiments drawn up in line.

Ney's attack, as might be expected, was sudden and furious.

The English, in the grey dawn, looking down the ravine, saw three huge masses start from the French lines and swarm up the slope. To climb an ascent so steep, vexed by skirmishers on either flank, and scourged by the guns which flashed from the summit, was a great and most daring feat—yet the French did it. Busaco indeed, is memorable as showing the French fighting quality at its highest point.

General Simon led Loison's attack right up to the mouths of the English guns, and in the dreadful charge, its order was never disturbed, nor its speed arrested.

"Ross's guns," says Napier, "were worked with incredible quickness, yet their range was palpably contracted every round; the enemy's shot came singing up in a sharper key; the English skirmishers, breathless and begrimed with powder, rushed over the edge of the ascent; the artillery drew back"—and over the edge of the hill came the bear-skins and the gleaming bayonets of the French!

General Simon led the attack so fiercely home that he was the first to leap across the English entrenchments, when an infantry soldier, lingering stubbornly after his comrades had fallen back, shot him point-blank through the face. The unfortunate general, when the fight was over, was found lying in the redoubt, amongst the dying and the dead, with scarcely a feature left. He recovered, was sent as a prisoner to England, and was afterwards exchanged, but his horrible wound made it impossible for him to serve again.

Crauford had been watching meanwhile with grim coolness the onward rush of the French. They came storming and exultant, a wave of martial figures, edged with a spray of fire, and a tossing fringe of bayonets, over the summit of the hill; when suddenly Crauford, in a shrill tone, called on his reserves to attack.

In an instant there rose, as if out of the ground, before the eyes of the astonished French, the serried lines of the 45th and 52nd; and what a moment before was empty space was now filled with the frowning visage of battle.

The British lines broke into one stern and deep-toned shout, and 1,800 bayonets, in one long line of gleaming points, came swiftly down upon the French. To stand against that moving hedge of deadly and level steel was impossible; yet each man in the leading section of the French raised his musket and fired, and two officers and ten soldiers fell before them. Not a Frenchman had missed his mark! They could do no more!

"The head of their column," to quote Napier, "was violently thrown back upon the rear, both flanks were

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overlapped at the same moment by the English wings, and three terrible discharges at five yards' distance shattered the wavering mass.

Before those darting points of flame the pride of the French shrivelled. Shining victory was converted, in almost the passage of an instant, into crushing defeat; shattered mass, with ranks broken, and colours abandoned and discipline forgotten, the French were swept into the depths of the ravine out of which they had climbed.

One of the dramatic episodes of the fight at this juncture is that of Captain Jones—known in his regiment as "Jack Jones," of the 52nd. Jones was a fiery Welshman, and led his company in the rush on General Simon's column. The French were desperately trying to deploy, a *chef-de-bataillon* giving the necessary orders with great vehemence. Jones ran ahead of his charging men, outstripping them by speed of foot, challenged the French officer with a warlike gesture to single combat, and slew him with one fierce thrust before his own troops, and the 52nd, as they came on at the run, saw the duel and its result, were lifted by it to a mood of victory, and raised a sudden shout of exultation, which broke the French as by a blast of musketry fire!

For hours the battle spluttered and smouldered amongst the skirmishers in the ravines, and some gallant episodes followed. Towards evening, for example, a French company, with signal audacity, and apparently on its own private impulse, seized a cluster of houses only half a musket shot from the Light Division, and held it while Crauford scourged them with the fire of twelve guns. They were only turned out at the point of the bayonet by the 43rd. But the battle was practically over, and the British had beaten, by sheer hard fighting, the best troops and the best marshals of France.

In the fierceness of actual fighting, Busaco has never been surpassed, and seldom did the wounded and dying lie thicker on a battle-field than where the hostile lines struggled together on that fatal September 27th. The *mêlée* at some points was too close for even the bayonet to be used, and the men fought with fists or with the butt end of their muskets.

From the rush which swept Regnier's men down the slope, the Connaught Rangers came back with faces and hands and weapons literally splashed red with blood. The firing was so fierce that Wellington, with his whole staff, dismounted. Napier, however—one of the famous fighting trio of that name, and who afterwards conquered Scinde—fiercely refused to dismount, or even cover his red uniform with a cloak.

"This is the uniform of my regiment," he said, "and in it I will show, or fall this day." He had scarcely uttered the words when a bullet smashed through his face, and shattered his jaw to pieces. As he was carried past Lord Wellington he waved his hand and whispered through his torn mouth: "I could not die at a better moment!"

Of such stuff were the men who fought under Wellington in the Peninsula!

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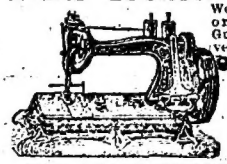

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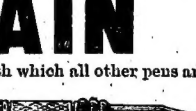

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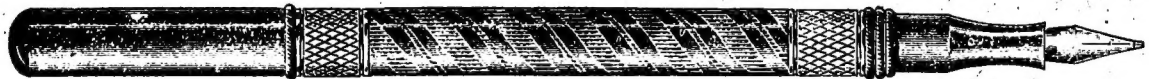

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Answers to Correspondents.

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Rustic, who recently came for the first time to London, was impressed with the number of people that stream into the City during the early part of the day. He wants to know how many enter London daily? ————According to the most reliable statistics, about 800,000.

G. B.—The reason March winds are injurious to people in a delicate state of health, is because they are generally very cold, raw, and keen. Their dryness also is very unfavourable to people whose lungs and throat are naturally sensitive.

G. H.—Yes, oysters are quite the most nourishing. A quart of oysters contains, on an average, the same quantity of nutritive substance as a quart of milk, a pound of very lean beef, a pound and a half of codfish, or two-thirds of a pound of bread.

P. M. wishes to know the one building which represents the greatest amount of human labour.————The Great Pyramid of Ghizah. There were about 100,000 men at work on it for over fifty years.

S. T.—The Italian army. The privates are allowed to sleep two hours in the middle of the day.

C. K.—Only one lady has ever been made a Freemason, and that was Miss St. Leger, daughter of Lord Doneraile, in about the year 1739.

R. W. H.—Women were not allowed to act upon the stage in England before the Restoration of Charles II. Previous to that time all women's parts were taken by men dressed as women.

T. L. H.—"Scotland Yard" is so-called because at one time a palace stood on the same site, which was built for the reception of the Scottish kings when visiting England.

S. B.—You can still see the "Doomsday Book" if you wish. It is kept under a glass case in the Record Office, Fetter Lane, London, E.C.

Rose.—The custom of wearing a wedding-ring came from the Romans. The reason they are placed upon the third finger of the left hand is because it is supposed to press a vein in that finger which communicates directly with the heart.

G. B.—The only reason I can give you for the formation of icebergs is that the intense cold causes the water to freeze. At any rate, I have never heard of any other version.

Dairymaid. — A good cow should yield six pounds of butter a week in the summer, and three in the winter.

S. G. D.—Birds have a keener vision than any other animal. The "kestrel" possesses such wonderful powers of sight that it is able to see a mouse when it is itself at such a height in the air that it is invisible to the naked eye.

H. M. B.—Tea was introduced into England by the Dutch, in 1160. It was considered a great luxury in those days, as much as £10 the pound being sometimes paid for it.

Miss E. R.—The reason fair people become so much more easily freckled than their darker complexioned sisters is because of the transparency of the outer cuticle of their skin, which more plainly reveals the freckles left by the sun.

J. J.—No. The sea is not at the same temperature summer and winter.

T. S. B.—A man breathes eighteen times a minute on an average, this is not taking into consideration the rapidity with which a man breathes when running up hill to the station in order to catch his train in the morning.

A. F. C.—Æsop's Fables are said to have been written about 600 years before Christ.

G. C. C.—The entire coast line of the globe measures 136,000 miles.

Captain.—I should recommend the use of nerve stimulants, such as a small cupful of very strong coffee to be taken about two hours before sailing, to prevent or mitigate sea-sickness. Many persons find comfort and relief lying down in their berths with a hot-water bottle to their feet, by which means sleep may be obtained, and with it a temporary abatement of the distressing giddiness and nausea.

R. E. H.—Only those members whose names appear in the lists of "Commons" are included in the Picture Puzzles.

H. T.—The world's navies employ about 1,700,000 men.

T. L.—It is quite right of you to point out what you consider mistakes, but at the same time you should be careful in the assertions you make. The present Earl of Darnley did not succeed to the title until 1896; the Earl of Dartney was not born until 1866, while Baron Henley succeeded to the title in 1841.

H. L.—The name of the heliotrope comes from two Greek words signifying "twined towards the sun." It has long been a belief that the flower of the heliotrope turns with the advancing day to face the sun. In some species of this plant this curious phenomenon does really occur.

A. D. S., while on a recent visit to Morocco, was very much struck with the number of blind men he saw about the streets of Fez, the capital of that country, and he writes to ask me if there is any reason assigned for this peculiarity.————The Moors are inveterate coffee drinkers. As you no doubt observed, many of the merchants sit in their bazaars drinking coffee continuously throughout the day. This pernicious habit is very injurious to the eyesight, and frequently completely destroys it at a comparatively early age, when persistently indulged in.

D. W.—In proportion to its size, Belgium is the most densely-populated country in the world.

S. Smith.—Your own surname is the commonest in England, then comes Jones, followed closely by Williams.

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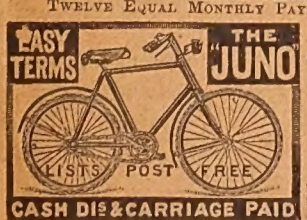

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